University of Alberta

Images and Stories of Hope: Understanding Hope and Transformation with Adult ESL Learners and Teachers

by

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Steve, who lives in hope as easily as he can brave despair.
I simply could not have done it without you. - Ch

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRIGUED BY HOPE

And hope is the oxygen of the human spirit; without it our spirit dies, whereas with it, it can survive even appalling suffering.
Sommerville, 2000

I am intrigued by the audacity of hope. It is the audacious nature of hope - the spirited, daring, boldness - that creates surprising outcomes to disconcerting circumstances that seem inevitably doomed. I long to understand the hope that sustained Nelson Mandela for 27 years in a South African prison. I wonder how hope eradicated the cancer in a small boy who got to see a rare butterfly in the Amazon. I marvel at the hope that I witness daily in the struggles of the immigrant learners I teach. And I am moved, inspired, and propelled by the hope that orients my spirit. I am called to understand what it means to hope – as individuals, as learners, and as teachers.

This research is about the impressions and experiences of hope of immigrant ESL (English as a Second Language) learners and their teachers. Their stories of hope in and outside the formal education venue contribute depth and richness to the tapestry of hope that has been woven by the struggles and successes of all who engage in life. When I was first introduced to the Hope Foundation of Alberta, I was struck by an excerpt written by Jevne (1991). In response to an incredulous query as to why anyone would do a job that is privy to so much suffering, her reply was, "to the outsider I'm sure it's disconcerting….but you don't see the courage, the hope… You don't see the dedication and vision of an incredible team doing an impossible task… I can think of very few people who in their work have the privilege of seeing courage every day" (p.11). She was referring to her work in a cancer hospital, but the words resonated powerfully with me in my work in the ESL classroom of refugees and the disenfranchised. It was in that instant that I became determined to learn more about hope.

The seed of my interest in hope had actually been sown two years earlier, but it was not part of my understanding at the time. I faced a personal tragedy in my life, a loss that somehow further connected me to those I teach. This trauma occurred about midway through my career and along my journey of hope and despair, I became acutely aware that the experience was changing my teaching in dramatic ways. I began to wonder if and how ESL educators could intentionally use hope as a way toward transformative learning. I was filled with a curiosity about whether hope could transform learning in ways similar to those which transformed my ideas and practice of teaching.

My preliminary research into hope showed that educators in general have been overlooking a phenomenon that health professionals have already begun to harness. Within the medical community, evidence was mounting that hope was a pivotal factor in health and that it should be nurtured. As an educator, I have witnessed times when education practice based on current theories of adult learning cooperate with, enhance, and nurture hope; at other times, even some of our 'best practices' seem to camouflage or intrude on hope in the teaching / learning journey. I believe learners and teachers in the ESL context would be well served if educators strive to work *with* hope and *through* hope to better understand *about* hope.

Hope has been defined as a "*multidimensional* dynamic life force characterized by a *confident* yet *uncertain* expectation of achieving a future *good* which, to the hoping person, is *realistically* possible and *personally significant*" (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985 p. 379). This is not the only model that tries to pin down the elusive, intangible qualities of hope, but it encompasses the essence of the ongoing scholarly discussion. Although one-dimensional frameworks exist (Snyder, 1994; Stotland, 1969), hope is more readily understood as consisting of multiple dimensions including cognitive, relational, affective, contextual, behavioural, and temporal spheres (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985) and being a rational, experiential, and transcendent process that is irreducibly linked to hopelessness (Farran, Herth, & Popovich., 1995; Hafen, Karren, Frandsen, & Smith, 1996). Hope is related to one's sense of purpose, and involves factors of risk and authentic caring (Nekolaichuk, Jevne, & Maguire, 1999) and its depictions are often most easily shared through stories (Edey, 2000; Jevne, 1994).

The phenomenon of hope was catapulted into academic discourse when Dr. Karl Menninger gave a bold address at an annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in 1959. His talk called on physicians to focus attention on the "basic, but elusive ingredient in our daily work... hope" (1959, p. 481) and thus spawned the interest in hope in the field of medicine. At the end of the address, however, Menninger extended his plea beyond the medical sphere:

> There are many people in the world... filled with a great apprehensiveness... They are afflicted with great suffering which all of our discoveries have not ameliorated, and awed by vast discoveries which none of us can fully comprehend... They are our friends, our brothers and sisters, our neighbors, our cousins in foreign lands... for them and for ourselves – are we not now duty bound to speak up as scientists, not about a new rocket or a new fuel... but about the validity of Hope" (p.491).

Only in the past decade has there been significant interest in the way hope impacts education. Snyder's (1995) research has indicated that hope levels were a better indicator of success than emotional intelligence, so there is pedagogical merit in coaxing out hope as a pathway to success. In the specific multicultural context of ESL education, there is additional impetus for engaging hope in teaching and learning. Recent work in the multicultural studies of hope find there is a quality of hope inherent in the education enterprise itself, and the findings of my study support that conclusion (Parkins, 1997; Kauser, 2000; Holt, 2000). Hope has also been shown to display itself differently across cultures (Averill, Catlin, & Chon, 1990). Hope is also connected to a change or growth, which naturally leads to questions about how and if hope is present during the changes incurred though education. One of the dominating discourses in adult education is transformative learning theory – a theory of adult learning that interrogates change.

Transformative learning is a theory of learning initiated in 1978 by Jack Mezirow. The theory grew out of a study of the learning experiences of women enrolled in college re-entry programs who set the stage for Mezirow's theory of perspective transformation. Perspective transformation involves becoming critically aware of tacit assumptions and beliefs that limit our ability to understand and act upon the world (Mezirow, 2000). In 'informative learning' we change what we know; in 'transformative learning' we change how we come to know, what knowledge sources we give authority, and how new ways of knowing puts the framework of knowledge itself at risk (Kegan, 2000). Transformative learning is an epistemological change that happens through a process of critical reflection. As an education practice it seeks to "foster a greater degree of insight and agency in adult learners by highlighting the understandings, skills, and dispositions involved and the conditions under which transformative learning is facilitated or precipitated" (Mezirow, 2000, p. xiv) .

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to raise the voice of hope in education in general and in adult ESL education in particular. I set out to gather stories, photographs, thoughts, and impressions of hope from ESL learners and teachers in order to understand what it means to hope and what place hope has in learning and teaching. The research was conducted with the over-arching question, 'What do adult ESL learners and teachers say about their notions of hope, with particular reference to the relationship of hope to their learning experiences?' A series of guiding questions was used to shape the inquiry of the reflections, stories, and images: What are the critical incidents that enhanced, diminished, or made visible the hope of this sample group? Is there any discernible relationship between the hope of instructors and the hope of learners? How can an understanding of hope inform our understanding of the transformative learning process? Can hope itself be an emancipatory process and, if so, how aware of the emancipatory nature of the hoping process are those that hope?

In a theoretical vein, one purpose of this thesis is to juxtapose hope theory and transformative learning theory to uncover what new questions and insights this may bring to the foreground. As a starting point, I delve into the critical nature of hope and the spiritual dimension of learning and explore ways that each can further inform the other. Transformative learning has been expanded upon through many perspectives in the education arena. Looking at transformative learning theory through the lens of hope offers a dramatically different perspective from which to apprise of and appraise transformative learning. An outside voice, as it were, allows new questions to be asked in new ways. Hope theory does not rely on the same assumptions as education models and, therefore, offers a unique gaze that opens up space to "produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently" (St. Pierre, 2000, p.27). And that is the very task of transformative learning.

This is an exploratory, interactive, phenomenological study. A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of what people experience and from the vantage point of the self generates richer, more nuanced details about the essence of experiential, contextual, and conceptual meanings (Harper, 2000; Patton, 2002). Its aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of a lived experience. It requires that a researcher capture and describe as fully as possible how people perceive, describe, feel about, and make sense of a phenomenon, in this case, hope (Patton, 2002). I chose a qualitative paradigm for its emphasis on process and meaning and the intimate relationship it allows between researcher, participant, and the phenomenon. I chose to use photographs and narratives as a means to capture the depth and breadth of the lived experience. I did not begin the research journey with a hypothesis to prove. I began with an openness to listen to what others told me about hope, and an openness to uncover those things that I had no way of knowing that I did not know.

This research is not only exploratory. Intervention is an important facet of this work. It is nestled in an emancipatory approach to research that purposely engaged women and men, teachers and learners, the marginalized and the dominant - those whose power is unequally distributed in the master narrative of the West in a mutual, collaborative inquiry. Qualitative research traditions originating in sociology and anthropology (the science of the colonizer) have historically assumed their right to study the less powerful (Harper, 2000). The positionality of the 'viewer' with respect to the 'viewed' defines the subject in ways that can "reify the relationships of inferiority and superiority endemic to colonization" (Harper, 2000, p.728). bell hooks (1994) refers to English as the "language of conquest and domination" (p.168). My academic work and my experience in the ESL classroom have sensitized me to the tensions experienced by learners who resist being integrated into this new culture and language at the expense of their own identities at the same time as they feel compelled to learn English because as Adrienne Rich says, "This is the oppressor's language and I need it to speak to you" (bell hooks, 1994, p.168). To share their ways of knowing in a world dominated by English, they must adopt the language in which they can be heard - a process that puts in jeopardy the very ways of knowing that come through language. I did not want to follow a research model that would further undermine their knowledge by gazing at the 'Other' through one-way glass. Qualitative research from a phenomenological perspective couched in an emancipatory paradigm was a way to respond to this problem.

In choosing to adopt a narrative approach to the inquiry, I knew I was surrendering some neutrality. In every narrative, the story belongs to the teller, but the listener makes choices on how to hear the story (Edey, 2000). Those choices shape the responses of the listener. I chose to hear the stories from a hopeful perspective in order that my responses and interview questions could be hope-enhancing rather than hope-diminishing. The purpose of this study, then, is also to share hope.

Finally, it is my hope that this research endeavour will serve to enhance the hope of those who participate in it, and those who read it, as much as it has elevated my own sense of hope.

Significance of the Study

This research makes a contribution to those engaged in the work of ESL and in the study of hope at both a theoretical and practical level. Both theoretical constructs on which this study is based readily admit they are theories-in-progress. As we conduct our work in the fields of hope and education, there is a persistent awareness that there is much more to be understood - nuances and deep questions, incongruities and conflicts that beg explanation. This theoretical analysis engages the reader in novel ways to consider hope from a multicultural perspective and to consider transformative learning theory from a hope perspective.

The findings of this thesis propose considerations for practice as well. Hope was found to be a crucial factor in the lives and education experiences of the participants. While teachers and learners shared many perceptions of hope, important differences emerged that have implications for practice. Teachers are called to consider anew the issues of relationship, evaluation, and hegemony in their classrooms and their profession. Learners are confirmed as bearers of authentic knowledge that gives insight into the ways hope is understood, experienced, and communicated in other cultural contexts and life situations. This insight can enlighten the practice of both educators and hope counselors. The findings of this study can help those who do hope work become more sensitive and responsive in their practice to those who hope in a different language.

This research process also demonstrates the power of an intentional focus on hope. This impacts educators at all levels of practice – policy- makers, administrators, curriculum developers, and teachers - because if hope can been shown to enhance learning and foster increased agency, do we have the right to exclude it from the purview of education?

CHAPTER TWO: A HOPEFUL LITERATURE

Few ideas have dominated the discourse of a field to the extent of transformative learning. First articulated by Mezirow as transformative learning theory, this understanding of a uniquely adult style of learning has been debated, critiqued, extended, refuted, and elaborated upon in academic journals and discourse worldwide. The intent of this thesis is to add another avenue of inquiry: a look at transformative education through the lens of hope.

Since Menninger's revolutionary address in 1959, where he first called attention to the impact of hope in medicine, there has been a growing body of research and theory regarding hope. Originally limited to medical spheres, the study of hope has broadened, and new and important questions are beginning to percolate regarding its influence and import in education. A look at transformative learning theory through the lens of hope opens interesting and novel ways to conceptualize transformative learning. It invites reflection on where dimensions of hope may further clarify the workings of transformative learning. Furthermore, by intentionally inviting hope into the dialogue, hope can serve as an ally in the sometimes daunting task of teaching and learning in the quest of transformation.

Hope Constructs

Perhaps the oldest and most famous story of hope in Western literature comes from Greek mythology. When Zeus discovered Prometheus stealing fire from the gods he became so outraged he created the incredibly beautiful Pandora and sent her to earth with her famous box of woes. Pandora could not resist opening the box and in so doing unleashed a plethora of ills unto the world. As she rushed to close the lid, she saw that the only thing left in the box was hope. Assuredly, this is a most puzzling and inconclusive comment on hope. Was hope to be the one redeeming virtue that would serve as an antidote to all the strife that had been unleashed to earth? Or was it included as the perfect vice that would prolong the suffering brought on by all the rest of the troubles in Pandora's box? This question has confounded writers for centuries. The verdict seems to depend on whether hope is thought to be realistic or an illusion (Snyder, 1991). An increasing amount of evidence suggests the influence of hope to be too tangible to be illusionary.

It is the breadth and profundity of its touch on human lives that has made definitions of hope so vague and ambiguous. Also distracting is that some parts of the hope structure are conscious, others on the threshold of awareness, still others unconscious (Bird, 1998). While hope has been a somewhat elusive concept to define, it remains tenaciously witnessed and experienced. Because they have not been able to negate its presence, scholars from a variety of fields have continued their struggle to reconceptualize hope and to make a deeper more tangible definition possible.

Samuel Coleridge, in his *Work without Hope* wrote, "Hope without an object cannot live" (in Snyder, 1996, p.3). This simple idea - anchoring hope to a concrete goal - provided the starting point in Snyder's model of hope. In Snyder's model, hope is a goal-directed cognitive process that has two necessary components. The *agency* *component* refers to the cognitive energy or will to reach a goal. The *pathways component* refers to the person's perceived ability to reach that goal.

Since neither agency nor pathways alone can produce high hope and since the goal is an integral part of the model, Snyder's definition of hope stands in contrast to the common understanding of optimism. When an optimist says 'everything will work out', it is evidence of the agency component of hope indicating the will or desire for things to work out. There is, however, no concrete goal and there may not be the pathways or cognitions necessary to effect change. It is the awareness of the pathways that enables the high hope person to find new pathways when the original one is blocked. Much of the mistrust and suspicion of hope is rooted in confusing it with optimism.

Snyder's belief that hope is a tangible, measurable cognitive coping strategy (Snyder, 1996) has enriched the study of hope. He has helped to authenticate the study of hope and has opened the doors for further research. This cognitive analysis of the structures of hope however, limps behind the actual experience of hope. Other writers have taken a less cognitive, more experiential approach in their attempts to describe the structure of hope. Some even deny the fruitfulness of trying to limit hope to a definition. Eloquently and simply stated by researchers from the Hope Foundation in Alberta, "We have not tried to define hope. Clients have described and defined it for themselves. Hope is their language and we [can] discuss it without attempting to standardize its meaning" (Edey, et al., 1998).

These models do not stand in opposition to Snyder, but imbue his model with a deeper respect for the "elusive, intangible qualities of hope that are grounded in the uniqueness of experience" (Nekolaichuk, et al., 1999). Many hope scholars accede that, while we no longer believe hope itself to be too vague and elusive a concept to study, we acknowledge that there are still mysterious and intangible qualities that are not fully accounted for in a definition that limits hope to "an essential cognitive coping strategy" (Snyder, 1995, p.1).

Ronna Fay Jevne has rightly been hailed as a leading authority in the area of hope (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Jevne, 1991, 1993; Jevne & Nekolaichuk, 2003; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999). A leading scholar and author in the study of hope, she has also spent years working with the terminally ill in cancer clinics. This balance between her scholarly research and her lived experience - the witnessing and participating in profound displays of hope in the face of death and grief - gives Jevne a view of hope that can encompass both the heart and the intellect. Hers is a holistic and intimate knowledge of hope. For Jevne, "there are no recipes; there are no formulas; there are no pat answers. There is only hope" (Jevne, 1991, p. 12).

Jevne describes the "hoping process, the goal of which is to deal with the uncertainty in life - to ward off fear and despair" (Jevne, 1991, p.150). Based on Jevne's model, a team of researchers (Nekolaichuk et al., 1999) conducted a study in an attempt to further understand the personal meaning of hope. The findings suggest that three factors are present in the subjective experience of hope. These factors cover the personal, situational, and interpersonal realms of experience. *Personal spirit* revolves a central core of meaning and energy. *Risk* is the situational factor that is experienced as predictability or boldness. The interpersonal dimension is *authentic caring* which revolves around issues of credibility and comfort. These researchers conclude that these dimensions are interconnected and cannot be compartmentalized. They further suggest that they should be conceptualized in three-dimensional space rather than in one dimension. Therefore, any definition of hope must conceptualize hope as a multi-dimensional, holistic experience and at the same time must be faithful to knowledge of the underlying subjective nature of hope (Nekolaichuk et al., 1999).

A third model of hope is presented in the work of Farran, Herth and Popovich (1995). They examine its nature, its relationship to hopelessness, its distinction from other related states such as wishing and optimism, as well as devices for measuring it. Hope "constitutes a delicate balance of experiencing the pain of difficult life experiences, drawing upon one's soul, spiritual, or transcendent nature, and at the same time maintaining a rational or mindful approach for responding to these life experiences" (Farran et al., 1995, p. 9). They use the acronym GRACT to refer to their construct of hope. Hope is G = goals that motivate and is dependent on R = resources, is an A = active process that requires a sense of C = control, and is based in T = time. They further elaborate that hope is a relational process that can be "influenced through the gift of presence"(Farran et al., 1995). They contrast the notion of hope with the act of wishing, arguing that the cognitive, affective, and behavioral expressions of wishing are very different to those of hope. Wishing is a passive act, which limits itself to positive outcomes. It is not the holistic embracing of the life experience that hoping is because it allows no room for the negative, painful, or difficult aspects of the human condition.

While there is still no absolute consensus on the definition of hope we can see the convergence of thought among the theories. In one way or another hope involves the intersection of goals, relationships, action and transcendence. There is consistent reference to the magnitude of the power of hope. If we accept that hope has power, so far undefined in its breadth, perhaps we should look at harnessing some of that power in the education setting. There is much to be gained in understanding the influence of hope in education.

Transformative Learning

Fascination with transformative learning sometimes belies the fact that, while it is held by many (Cranton, 2002: Freire, 2000; Mezirow, 2000) as the primary goal of adult education, it is surely not the only goal. Transformative learning theory fits into a larger framework that is based on Habermas's schema outlining three kinds of knowledge - the instrumental, the communicative, and the emancipatory. Instrumental knowledge is objective knowledge steeped in the logico-scientific tradition. Communicative knowledge is knowledge derived in relationship with others and is based in humanist philosophies. This type of knowledge dominates fields such as sociology, politics, psychology, and education. Emancipatory knowledge is the product of critical reflection and is the knowledge acquired in transformative learning. So, Mezirow's transformative learning theory addresses emancipatory knowledge. It is important to distinguish here between transformative learning theory as defined by Mezirow, where transformation in 'habits of mind' occurs, and transformative education practices as understood by social activists such as Freire, Shor, bel hooks, and Tisdell, who aspire to employ education to transform oppressive social structures through the process of critical reflection.

Mezirow describes transformative learning as a process by which learners become critically aware of how and why assumptions limit the way they perceive, understand, and feel about the world. According to Mezirow, the way one makes meaning in one's life is shaped and guided by meaning *schemes*, which are the beliefs and assumptions one holds about one's place in and relationship to the world. Collectively, these beliefs and assumptions shape one's meaning *perspective,* which refers to a belief system or worldview. A shift in a belief system is what Mezirow calls perspective transformation (Taylor, 2000). This perspective transformation occurs through a process of critical reflection. Brookfield (1997) explains the critical thinking process as one of recognizing and researching the beliefs and assumptions that underlie our thoughts and actions, and being aware of the hegemonic forces that carve out and shape meaning perspectives.

According to Mezirow, one can reflect on either the content (the what), the process (the how) or the premise (the why) of an idea or experience (Cranton, 1994). Only premise reflection can lead to perspective transformation. So, perspective transformation requires a dramatic shift in entire belief systems and must involve a process of critical reflection. A belief system, or frame of reference, involves both a habit of mind and a point of view, making it essentially epistemological (Mezirow, 2000).

Epistemology does not refer to what we know; rather it is a way of knowing (Kegan, 2000). It involves cognition, but is not solely a cognitive process. Cognition may constitute a frame of reference, but a frame of reference may, for example, be passionately defended or tentatively held, a clearly affective aspect. Or, it may be rooted in familial or cultural traditions, making it an interpersonal event; or it may have implicit or explicit ethical ramifications that make it a moral consideration (Kegan, 2000). A frame of reference may also be an expression of our deeply held spiritual beliefs.

Mezirow concentrates on the cognitive aspects of transformation with particular attention to critical reflection and discussion. He has, however shifted his stance somewhat from his initial conceptualization of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow now acknowledges the importance of the affective and social context of the learning process. In his latest work he admits that learning occurs “in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historical settings [and] must be understood in the context of cultural orientations embodied in our frames of reference” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). He also considers “asymmetrical power relationships” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 28) and social interaction as important in the learning experience.

Emancipatory education is closely linked to transformational learning in that it happens through critical reflection and can transform meaning perspectives (Cranton, 1994). Emancipatory learning is the "emancipation from ...forces that limit our options and our rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control" (Cranton, 1994, p.47).

This understanding of transformation draws on Freire’s (2000) ideas of emancipatory education. Freire saw all education as either serving the agenda of liberation or oppression. His goal was to empower learners through dialogue, to critique their place in the world and thus empowered, to act to transform their world.

This process he named *conscientização,* inadequately translated in English as *conscientization*, but eloquently expressed in the French equivalent *prise de conscience: seized by consciousness* (Freire, 2000).

Emancipatory education develops capacities of critical reflection on entrenched assumptions and seeks opportunities for participation in discourse that disturbs existing hegemonies (Freire, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). I will, therefore, assume an emancipatory quality inherent in transformative learning. However, I will use the term *emancipatory education* to refer to the broad scope of transformative learning practices and reserve the term *transformative learning* for direct reference to Mezirow's theory-in-progress.

Transformational Quality of Hope

Nelson Mandela is a well-known figure in the world. He grew up rather ordinarily in a small village in South Africa. Yet, few would deny that his story is one of personal transformation, which led to at least some measure of emancipation for his entire nation (Daloz, 2000). In his own estimation, Mandela's transformation was gradual:

> I had no epiphany, no singular revelation, no moment of truth, but a steady accumulation of a thousand slights, a thousand indignities, a thousand unremembered moments produced in me an anger, a rebelliousness, a desire to fight the system that imprisoned my people. There was no particular day on which I said, From henceforth I will devote myself to the liberation of my people; instead, I simply found myself doing so, and could not do otherwise (Mandela, 1994, p.95).

Daloz (2000) cites this as powerful and easily recognizable example of transformation. Through the lens of hope, one can see, also, how hope was at work through the transformation. Most notably, hope is connected to a deep sense of personal meaning or purpose (Dufault & Martocchio, 1995; Havel, 1985; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999). Mandela's strong sense of purpose made it so he "could not do otherwise". This is evidence of hope. Further evidence is found in his desire to fight. Hope is an energizing force that calls for action (Farran et al., 1995; Snyder, 1995; Pruyser, 1963). Mandela understood the dynamics of injustice (critical reflection) but was not overcome because he experienced hope just as Dufault and Martocchio (1985) define it: "a multidimensional life force characterized by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good, which is realistically possible and personally significant" (p. 380).

Mandela's is a story of transformation in which we can find evidence of hope. Likewise there are hope stories that evidence the transformational quality of hope.

Jevne (1991) has listened to and recorded the stories of hope of patients, families, and caregivers facing cancer and the words of these people illustrate the power that hope has to transform. Evidence is found in examples of: a new sense of empowerment, "I found out I can make an incredible difference in almost every aspect of my life" (Del, in Jevne, 1991, p 48); shifts in perspective, "As I live more where the mysteries are, I still have my share of fear, but I am freer. My spirit can dance more easily" (Joan, in Jevne, 1991, p.68); shifts in worldview as many undergo a sense of collapsed time; "I can't often measure progress on a daily basis...I do it by the hour" (Stan, in Jevne, 1991, p.16): and shifts in habits of mind, "I finally determined that just because I was sick I wasn't going to stop living" (Murray, in Jevne, 1991, p.20).

These stories of hope and transformation highlight the intersect between the two. That the same story can inform these two disparate theoretical constructs may indicate that there are deeper issues at play. This challenges us to look deeper into the assumptions of both schools of thought and be open to discovering themes that may be underpinning both theories. A place to start may be a deeper inquiry into the critical nature of hope and the spiritual dimension of learning.

Hope as Critical Reflection

To begin the exploration into the convergence of thought between transformative learning and hope, two concepts emerging from the research, theory, and intentional practice of hope will be compared to the process of critical reflection. These two areas are: the being and doing of hope, and the dialectic between hope and hopelessness.

The being and doing of hope

In hope work, the emphasis of inquiry shifts to a focus on the *what* (content reflection) and *how* (process reflection), with less interest in the premise reflection (the *why*) that is mandatory for transformative learning. In devaluing reflection other than that which is critical, transformative learning theory limits both our understanding of transformation and our capacity to engage in transformative learning and teaching. While Mezirow and others have certainly expanded their view of the process of transformation to include emotion and spirit, the critical nature of transformative learning needs to be further problematized. Examining comparisons with hope theory sheds new light on this idea.

Learning is the process of *meaning-making*, whereby we construct a coherent meaning from our experience. Transformative learning is the *reforming of* our meaning-making. This transformation is not merely an alteration of the meanings we make of the world, but a radical change in the very way we are constructing our meanings (Kegan, 2000). To accomplish this, we must externalize and investigate assumptions on which we build our frames of reference. This can only be done with objective knowledge, not subjective knowledge. According to constructive-developmental theory, the subject-object relationship is central to an epistemology. Objectified knowledge is external to our being and can be examined, critiqued, controlled and integrated into new meaning schemes. We can only critically reflect on that which is object. That which is subject is fused with our being and thereby controls us. In other words, "We 'have' object; we 'are' subject" (Kegan, 2000, p.53).

There are interesting connections here between this idea of the subject-object, and what has been referred to as the *being* and *doing* of hope. Dufault and Martocchio's (1985) model describes hope as a multi-dimensional life force that is process oriented and characterized by two spheres: generalized hope and particularized hope. Particularized hope is linked to a specific concrete or abstract 'hope object'. It "clarifies, prioritizes, and affirms what a hoping person perceives is most important in life. It preserves and restores the meaning in life (Dufault &

Martocchio, 1985, p. 381). Generalized hope, on the other hand, is the state of being hopeful. There is a strong presence of hope but nothing is concretely hoped for. Generalized hope can sustain a person through periods when extreme events render particularized hopes of little consequence. In this model one can understand generalized hope as the *being* of hope, while particularized hope is the *doing* of hope.

The being and doing of hope are important facets in the work of hope. Both are integral to the experience of hope and can be used by a person to sustain hoping and coping in difficult times. In smooth times, both facets actively contribute to meaning making.

The capacity of particularized hope to clarify, prioritize, and affirm meaning heralds us to consider this in light of critical reflection and transformation. The being of hope has a subjective nature. It is extra-rational and at times, just beyond the threshold of awareness. The doing of hope, the action, is much more tangible and readily observable, similar to objective knowledge. Mezirow (2000) suggests that a person can have affect on only objectified knowledge and that we are at the mercy of subjective knowledge (Kegan, 2000). In general, transformative learning theory assumes subjective knowing to be of less value – the more immature way of knowing. The goal of transformative learning is to be suspicious of subjective knowledge and work intentionally to externalize that subjective knowledge (change it from subject to object) in order to examine it, critique it, and change it. Hope theory conceptualizes this relationship differently. The being and doing of hope are equal and valued partners. The being of hope is a subjective type of knowledge; yet, a person can effect change on this subjective experience without first making it objective. For those engaged in vehement critical reflection, a perspective of hope could help remind that the intense *doing* of critical reflection is unavoidably accomplished by someone who is inevitably *being* a person.

Hope and Hopelessness

Hope and hopelessness share a necessary dialectical relationship. That is, they are opposite but related constructs that are juxtaposed in experience. A deep awareness and relationship to one necessitates the same with the other. Developmentally, hope and hopelessness share the same roots in the interpersonal, intrapersonal and environmental/social experiences; theoretically, they share attributes of experiential, transcendent, rational, and relational (Faran et al, 1995).

Those involved in hope work – the intentional use of hope in practice – are well aware of hopelessness. In hope-focused counseling done at the Hope Foundation, and in hope projects that focus on children, counselors and teachers inescapably find themselves having to journey with their client or learner's hopelessness in order to enhance hope. At times, it is a matter of allowing the client, the learner, or oneself to be hopeless. Hopeless, of course does not imply pessimistic, just as hope is not the same as optimism. Simplistically, one might think of it in terms of the states of being asleep and being awake. We know one by the absence of the other, they are opposites, and they are both integral to our well-being. Especially when times are bleakest, resting in hopelessness for a while can be rejuvenating.

This dialectical relationship between hope and hopelessness is one of the reasons hope is so important to consider in transformative learning. First, hope is both realistic and transcendent. Vaclav Havel (1986) said it best when he claimed:

> Hope is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizon…It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

It is this deep sense of meaning, well grounded in the reality of the moment that allows and supports transformative learning to take place.

The work of many hope scholars (Faran, et al, 1995; McGee, 1984; Snyder, 1995) has demonstrated that authentic hope is realistic hope. Realism, however, is not paramount. It is not the goal of hope to be realistic: rather, being realistic is the product of being genuinely hopeful. Being hopeful creates the space where one can feel safe enough to be real.

Recall some of the world's greatest leaders of transformation. The emancipatory endeavours of Vaclav Havel, Czech playwright, prisoner, and president, continued within and without the walls of prison as he went on to transform the Czech republic. Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Paulo Freire, and Victor Frankl are other notable examples where the dialectical relationship between hope and hopelessness can be observed. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning,* Victor Frankl (1984) writes about his experience in a wretched concentration camp where he would sit in the dark of the night and talk of hope to his fellow prisoners, telling them, "they must not lose hope but should keep their courage in the certainty that the hopelessness of our struggle did not detract from its dignity and meaning" (p.104). In his case, as in all the others, great hope was apparent in spite of the unimaginable hardship, and great hope sustained actions that transformed both habits of mind and oppressive social structures.

Transformative learning theory requires critical reflection. The focus of critical reflection on revealing power relationships and hegemonic assumptions can challenge hope and invite despair. This hopelessness in the face of the oppressive forces that we are purposely trying to uncover can be so overwhelmingly demoralizing as to lead to the "death of the transformative impulse" (Brookfield, 2000, p.145). When common sense tells us that defying the hegemonic forces and challenging power relationships can cause us to be ostracized from the groups and communities that give us our sense of identity, how can we remain critical, yet hopeful while practicing transformative education (Freire, 1997)? The answer to Freire's concern may lie in the intentional use of hope. Hope is not intimidated by hopelessness. Unlike wishing or optimism, hope can, because of its intimate connection to hopelessness, continue to energize our work even in the face of great adversity. For that reason, hope can be a great ally to both teachers and learners engaged in transformative education.

Hope as Spirituality

A second avenue of inquiry to illuminate the shared and/or opposing characteristics of hope and transformative learning can be found in the spiritual dimension of learning.

With the exception of religiously affiliated institutions, adult education forums, at least in the Western, Eurocentric, and predominately White tradition have for the most part excluded spirituality, operating instead on assumptions of teaching and learning that emphasize rationality, the scientific method, and the commodification of education (Tisdell, 2001). The Postmodern era has broken the silence and the oppressed voice of spirituality seems to have exploded in significant and varied expressions of spirituality in the realm of education (Dirkx 1997; Scott, 1997; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2001).

Tolliver and Tisdell (2001) offer a comprehensive definition of spirituality that I accept as a good operational definition. According to them, spirituality is related to

> ...(a) a connection to what many refer to as the Life-force, God, a higher power or purpose, Great Mystery, or Buddha Nature; (b) a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things; (c) meaning-making; (d) the ongoing development of one's identity (including one's cultural identity) moving toward greater authenticity; (e) how people construct knowledge through largely unconscious and symbolic processes manifested through image, symbol, and music, which are often cultural. In addition, spirituality is different from, but for some people, related to religion. Finally, spiritual experiences often happen by surprise. (p.13)

Those familiar with the body of literature and research on hope will recognize large areas of overlap.

The relational aspect of hope is cited universally in the literature (Farran et al., 1995; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999; Snyder, 1995). In particular, Dufault and Martocchio (1985) explain that the affiliative dimension of hope involves not only being in relation with other people, but can also include a connection to God, a higher purpose, or nature. This intersects clearly with both points (a) and (b) of the definition. Hope as life-force is evident in Jevne's (1993) beautifully simple definition of hope as 'the YES to life'. It also is supported in the work of Nekolaichuk, et al. (1999) who describe it as personal spirit with a central core of meaning. Farran, et al., (1995) refer to the 'soul of hope'. Hope-focused counseling practices invite clients to share their hope rituals, create hope kits, or explore and enhance their hope through art and music, so like spirituality, hope is manifest through symbol. Hope's inspiration by surprise and the call of hope to greater authenticity can be seen in the stories of cancer patients complied in a book by Ronna Jevne, *It All Begins with Hope* (1991).

Tolliver and Tisdell's (2001) definition suggests that hope is a spiritual phenomenon, which indeed it is. Hope, however, functions in a much broader spectrum than spirituality. One of the pitfalls of the current resurgence of interest in spirituality in education is the temptation to over emphasize the spiritual dimension of the human condition at the expense of cognitive, emotive, and somatic. This disconnection prompts some to label spirituality as 'flaky' (Wuthnow, in Tisdell, 2003, p. 26). Hope, although a spiritual phenomenon, realizes, respects and reveres, the cognitive, contextual, affective, behavioural and temporal; the rational and the non-rational; the physical, the mental and the spiritual.

Hope's connection to the physical has been present since its academic debut when Menninger (1959) implored physicians to pay heed to the healing power of hope. More recently, hope theory and practice are exploring more deeply the physicality of the hoping experience by attending to such things as laughter, physical space, and the senses (Edey, 2000; Jevne, 1993); however, further research is needed in this area.

In particular, humour, and its function in the hope process, has gained increased interest of late (Edey, 2000; Jevne, 1991). The therapeutic value of humour has been substantiated enough to warrant humour therapy at some hospitals (Jevne, 1991). In business as well, humour workshops for teambuilding and problem solving are now popular. The stories of hope-challenged individuals attest to the profound impact humour has in sustaining hope and fostering a sense of community (Jevne, 1991). Consider Leo's story:

> Leo was in the last stages of liver cancer. When he came to my office, he looked egg-yolk yellow. He responded that a hoped-for decision was not possible, that his ex-wife was already closing in for part of his estate, that his lawyer had said, "Don't worry, you're basically bankrupt" and that the pain was becoming intolerable. For some reason my spontaneous response was, "Other than that, how's your week been?" I was immediately concerned I had been inappropriate. However, Leo was laughing so hard I could hardly understand him as he said, "Thank goodness, someone still thinks I am alive! I am so tired of everyone treating everything so seriously (Jevne, 1991, p.170).

Mezirow (2000) suggests that the human condition may be best understood as "a continuous effort to negotiate untested meanings" and he agrees with Kundera, in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* that if there were too much incontestable meaning in the world, we would succumb under its weight (p.3). The physical experience of laughing has been shown to impact health and healing. The power of humour to create community is regularly experienced by teachers in their classrooms. Yet, the literature on transformative learning is silent on the topic of humour. Is it possible, for instance, that the physical experience of laughing forces the body to participate in the transcendent, and in doing so anchors us to a place where we all connected as beings? Certainly too early to tell, but, if humour impacts the workings of hope, and hope and transformative learning share some theoretical and experiential terrain, then research into the workings of humour might be another path toward understanding and facilitating transformation.

The use of music and symbol employed in hope-focused counseling (Edey et al, 1998) demonstrates an arena accepted and trusted to elevate hope with no pressure on the participant to rationalize his or her choice. The intentional use of hope is also rooted in the temporal: hope work meanders back and forth between hope orientations of the present, past, and future. The balance of all these dimensions encompasses the complexity of the human experience better than either historical rationality or postmodern spirituality. Reframing transformative education within the construct of hope invites the spiritual dimension into the education enterprise without setting up a misleading overemphasis.

Having attested to the spiritual nature of hope, I would like to respond to some critically reflective and valid questions raised by Fenwick (2001) regarding the ethical considerations raised in the pedagogical engagement of spirituality. In her article, Fenwick is justifiably wary of the loose interpretation of spirituality, as it is understood in popular culture. While popular culture admittedly weds transcendence to “spectacle, consumption, and euphoric bliss” (p.10), hope roots itself in the real work of engagement. Because its attachments run deeper than a positive outcome, hope does not fit well with the immediate gratification needs of the bliss-seeking consumers of today.

Secondly, Fenwick's concern that in making spirituality the province of adult education, we risk whole persons being co-opted into the global marketplace is well founded and should be paramount in the minds and hearts of those dedicated to emancipatory education. Hope, however, is multi-dimensional. When spirituality enters the education enterprise as part of the hope package, it enjoys the strength and protection afforded it by its multi-dimensionality. Being both realistic and transcendent and being inextricably linked to the whole of personhood, hope enables strength to resist cooption.

In light of the commodification of education we have witnessed thus far, adult educators have the ethical responsibility to be critically aware of how our practice may be in inadvertent collusion with globalization forces that are economically driven. In spite of the risks of making spirituality the province of adult education, however, as educators we must also ask ourselves if we can ethically NOT invite spirituality into the arena. Because of international globalization and Canadian multicultural policies, I think there is no choice but to address spirituality pedagogically. To refuse to allow the integration of the spiritual in a multicultural educational setting, where some participants may lead with the spirit, can serve to further entrench the existing hegemony.

The prime goal of adult learning is transformation. In the age of globalization, people and systems are compelled to share much more intimate quarters together. This proximity is exposing injustice at both the personal and systemic levels. Whether or not it is the province of adult education to engage in political mobilization per say, engaging individuals in a deeper awareness of the contradictions of society and the hegemonic assumptions on which they are based is important and can and wider social and political significance. It is hope that gives persons the ability to imagine a future in which they would like to participate. Hope should be invited to the table in education because it has something of value to offer to all levels of learning, the instrumental, the humanistic, and the emancipatory. Teaching and learning that intentionally engages hope would more easily transverse the terrain that unites all three areas of adult learning. Hope is realistic enough to embrace the value of instrumental learning; it is tenacious enough to sustain the courage necessary in the face of monumental shifts incumbent in emancipatory education; and it has enough heart and humour to entice our humanness into the arena.

CHAPTER THREE: EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH METHODS

"Every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (Silvermann, in Patton, 2002, p.542). To conduct a study about hope, through hope, is to intentionally choose to see the data through the prism of hope. I claim this at the outset to assure the reader that this study is neither neutral nor objective; nonetheless, a rich description of both the method and context of the data collection and analysis should expose this work as credible and valuable.

Being an educational researcher demands a series of relationships with the field which are often less graceful than those enjoyed by researchers in the logico-scientific vein. At their core, those messy relationships rest on a set of value-laden concerns about individual, community, and the betterment of society (Edwards, 2001). It is this that makes the arduous journey of educational research worth the effort.

Emancipatory Research

To begin, it is most important to explore the necessarily critical nature of emancipatory research and tease out the subtleties that differentiate a critical from an emancipatory paradigm. Emancipatory research invites and facilitates avenues of change and with the potential for deep meaning, and profound change come the potential for great exploitation. So, the emancipatory researcher must pay rigorous attention to ethical considerations. In the specific arena of adult ESL education, I argue for the imperativeness of an emancipatory model.

Gerstl-Pepin and Gunzenhauser (2002) tackle the thorny question of how to conceptualize research. The positivist tradition envisions the researcher as *hero*, who ventures out into the field, finds results, returns, and translates for the rest of the world (ibid.). Constructivists see research more as journey to make results. The notion of '*making results*' is likely to sting the conscience of the positivist, being far too close, at very least linguistically, to '*making up results*'. The emancipatory paradigm predilection to social and political action tilts this research approach more toward a collaborative making of results, to arrive at a conclusion that Fontana and Frey (2000) refer to as 'negotiated text'.

Emancipatory research is an elusive concept to define. It studies oppression and tries to account for, and disturb, the entrenched relationships between oppressed and oppressors, as well as the social systems and asymmetric power relations that facilitate the means of domination (Mertens, 1998). Mertens (1998) proposes that a fundamental difference between constructivist and emancipatory research models is that, where the former seeks equity through the benevolent sharing of power from the powerful to the powerless, the latter seeks to abandon the power rules altogether and relinquish control of the research to society's perennially disenfranchised. This is somewhat enigmatic. Once the powerful relinquish control, how can the powerless give voice to their research in the unchanged context of domination? The answer rests in the delicate difference between relinquishing control and abandoning interest altogether.

Freire, doing research in the early 1960s, demonstrated this delicate balance. In preparation for his work in literacy instruction, he conducted ethnographic research in the Brazilian communities where his program was to be implemented. He and a supporting cast of educators, anthropologists and students used a series of informal interviews, observations, and story analysis to compile their data on generative words (Crandall & Peyton, 1993). This group of researchers were powerful in relation to the subjects of their study. They used their location of power as a catalyst for change. But their ability to dissolve the power differential within the scope of the research made the authentic and rich results possible.

Freirean research is not the only interpretation to call itself emancipatory. Feminist, participatory, and critical theory are three examples of philosophies that inform emancipatory research (Mertens, 1998). Like Mertens (1998), I reject the label critical theory but perhaps for slightly different reasons. I take the Freirean argument for the impact of the *word* very seriously. Macedo (in Freire, 2000) makes a strong argument for the power of language to distort or define reality. He exposes the distorted images of reality that such current terms as *ethnic cleansing* and *collateral damage* evoke. So, the choice of a word is a political one in the sense that how one names the world, in part makes the world. For this reason, the use of the word *critical* in critical education is problematic for me.

The word *critic* comes from the Greek, *kriticos,* meaning one who is able to discern of judge (Merriam-Webster, 1986). There is no implication of action in this definition. Freire (2000) warns against mistaking a mere discussion with true dialogue, which is an activity that moves the critique from words to action. Some have criticized Mezirow's earlier work for undervaluing collective social action (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Collard & Law, 1989). Clark and Wilson (1991) charge that

Mezirow "appropriated Habermas's epistemology without incorporating its radical social critique and consequent demand for collective social action" (Clark & Wilson, 1991). I want to guard against critical evaluation that does not incorporate action - critique for its own sake. I find the word *critical*, for me personally, anaesthetizes my charge to action in much the same way as the word *collateral damage* anaesthetizes the hearts of those who watch and plan war. When we substitute the word *emancipatory* for *critical*, we close the door on any latent option to merely criticize, analyze, or discuss the problem. The use of the word *empancipatory* compels action. While the notion of criticality is central to emancipatory research, it is heuristic rather than conclusive.

Gordon's (in Mertens, 1998) criticism of critical and feminist discourses substantiates this argument. She refers to the blind side of the former discourses as the failure to recognize and articulate the critical and cultural model *generated by* the oppressed themselves. This term *generated by* underlines the core of emancipatory theory, the seed of self-directed action, which distinguishes it from the practice, if not the definition of critical theory. For critical researchers to omit this aspect is to negate the essence of emancipation.

The inspiration of some conceptual allies outside the field may help to further illuminate the subtleties that differentiate a critical paradigm from an emancipatory one. To explain, I must begin by situating this in the context of the hope theoretical model from whence it came.

Edey (2000) discusses the impact of storytelling in hope-focussed counselling. According to Edey, telling stories engages storyteller and listener in relationship.

Although the story belongs to the teller, the listener makes some decisions about how the story is heard. The listener can choose to listen to the story from a number of perspectives, one of which is through the perspective of hope. When the teller holds no hope for a good future he/she bears no responsibility for creating one; when the listener harbours no hope, he/she is unable to recognize positive possibilities that may be unveiled through the telling.

Considering this in the context of a research interview for example, one can see how when the 'story' involves oppression and injustice, the researcher must take care that questions intended to probe and prompt the participant in the interests of better understanding do not confine those involved, and the research project itself, to a hopeless retelling of the same injustices.

As new research paradigms emerge, the relationship between researcher and participant change. Casting our eyes to another conceptual ally, educators might do well to heed the words of Hart (1999) from the field of psychological counselling, who asserts that adopting a research paradigm that encourages a relationship between researcher and participant makes it difficult to tell the difference between a therapeutic relationship and a research interview. When therapist Etherington (1996) admits his difficulty with listening to "subjects talk about resigning themselves to their condition without exploring their feelings and challenging their blind spots and assumptions" (in Hart, 1999, p. 5), his words underline how closely some counselling issues resonate with those of emancipatory researchers.

Mertens (1998) asserts that one of the salient characteristics of emancipatory research paradigm is an examination of inequities, be they based on gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or other. Emancipatory research also interrogates how these inequities are reflected in asymmetric power relations. Integral to remedying asymmetric power relations within a larger context is a careful understanding and handling of power relationships within the research relationship itself. Researchers need to be aware that when research focuses on the primacy of experience, respect for the beliefs and values of others, an emphasis on relationship and process factors, and a search for authenticity, the relationship between researcher and participant "renders the respondent vulnerable and the researcher responsible" (Hart, 1999). Finch (1993, p.173 in Hart, 1999, p.2) eloquently quips, "I have also emerged from interviews with the feeling that my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves from people like me."

In a research interview, the dissolution of power differentials causes a blurring of roles and responsibilities. With no clear-cut roles and boundaries, and, moreover, parameters that can fluctuate during the course of the research relationship, the safeguards normally afforded by predictable structure are lost. When participants disclose more than originally planned, or discover new meanings through the course of the interview, they may be confronted by difficult personal issues and revelations that the researcher may be unprepared to handle. The well-meaning researcher could slip inadvertently into the role of inept therapist. This creates an ethical minefield, especially because the effectiveness of the interview method relies on the ability of researcher to facilitate the participant to disclose significant details relating to the research topic, a task approached through the development of a relationship of trust. Wellington (2000) refers to this as establishing rapport and admits that both task involvement and social involvement (involvement at a personal level) come into play. I would argue that for researchers committed to an emancipatory approach and the questions likely to be the focus of such inquiry, the personal level would likely be broached more often than not. Therefore, such research demands ethical practices that are scrupulous and vigilant.

In spite of the challenges inherent to emancipatory research, researchers in the field of ESL should remain undaunted, because of the very nature of this enterprise. Freire once referred to literacy as one of the concrete expressions of an unjust social reality (Freire, 2000). The status of ESL adult learners in Canada parallels Quigley's (1999) description of low-literate adult learners - "stereotyped as a fallen away group in a state of deficit… and in need of a remedial quick fix" (p. 253). ESL learners demonstrate Leicester's (2001) reference to the insights afforded by biculturalism. Their emerging bilingualism provides access to other conceptual/cultural framework, which in turn accelerates deeper insights, making critical reflection possible. Consequently, research in this area should account for the impact of these political realities. Also, research should not be conducted in such a manner as would obfuscate these political realities or undermine the confidence, the ability, or the will of the subjects to energize their truths. In other words, research should be emancipatory.

While Canada boasts its immigration policies and can rightfully claim credit for contributing significant funds toward the education of its newcomers, sadly, the reality of the newcomers is fraught with systemic barriers which compromise Canada's claim of justice and democracy (Burnaby, 1998). Federal programming is becoming more and more instrumental and institutionalized with the advent of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000), while provincial programs, once under the auspices of Alberta Learning, are now being moved to the Alberta Human Resources and Employment with the concomitant emphasis on policies which favour expediency and productivity over education.

Both of these trends reflect the market-based philosophy that undergirds the funding of ESL programs - philosophies which compromise emancipatory education. Canada has ascribed to a policy that sees the learning of the dominant language as the natural common sense solution to communication problems in the workplace and in society. As the argument goes, if linguistic minorities are taught English, they will not suffer economic and social inequality. This assumption becomes entrenched as common sense and turns itself around to become the very justification for exclusionary policies that sustain inequality (Williams, 1998). Thus, the need for ESL endeavours, including research, that further the causes of equity and justice is urgent.

Good emancipatory research furthers the cause of social justice and equity. Good emancipatory researchers need attend to the delicacies of ethics, relationship, and action with integrity and reflection. Researchers in the field of ESL are charged with a special responsibility given the content and context of their work. As issues of power are exposed and mitigated within the research experience, the researcher is emancipated along with the participant. The emancipation of one becomes both the cause and result of the other's emancipation.

Choosing a Methodology

Patton (2002) posits that one can judge neither the appropriateness of method nor quality of results without first knowing the purpose of the study and for whom the work is intended. This work is intended to raise the voice of hope in the field of ESL. Further to this, the work is intended to provide a venue for educators and learners to explore together the meaning of hope in the adult ESL experience. So, the work is intended to any and all stakeholders in the ESL enterprise as well as those engaged in the intentional study of hope. It aspires to further expand on hope theory and transformational learning theory, and how both may affect the agency of adult ESL learners.

I have clearly situated this research within an emancipatory paradigm, and thus the research is shaped by the questions and constraints imposed on it by this paradigm. Any choice in paradigm reflects a connection at an ethical level to the politics and values of both researcher and his or her social context. However, the design of a qualitative investigation is unavoidably influenced by the historical perspectives that preceded it. Qualitative research can therefore find itself anywhere along a continuum from stringent design principles on the one hand to emergent, responsive structures on the other hand. In any case, good qualitative research demands built-in flexibility to make room for the surprises one is apt to stumble upon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The strategies of inquiry in this study have been carefully crafted to explore the narratives of hope, to be sensitive to the margins of the narrative as well as the main body, and to maintain a vigilant wonder at how the hopefulness of these people impacts their sense of agency and empowerment. In part this will be accomplished through the actions of the researcher and in part through the act of the research project itself. The research design borrows elements from several respected research traditions: narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Creswell, 2002; Edey, 2000; Jevne, 1991), convergent interviewing (Attwater & Hase, 2004; Dick, 1999), and photo-assisted interviewing (Harper, 2000; Taylor, 2002). All aspects of the design reflect my concurrence with Schwandt (1997, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) that interviewers are active participants in the research relationship and thus "we cannot lift the results of the interviews out of the contexts in which they were gathered and claim them as objective data with no strings attached" (p. 663).

Narrative research design is a qualitative approach in which the researcher collects stories generated by the participants and narrates the experience in rich detail (Creswell, 2002). When retelling the stories, the research concentrates on specific situations or ideas and analyzes them for themes. Existing research into the nature and experience of hope supports the usefulness of storytelling. When asked to describe what hope means, people often choose to tell a story to illustrate their meaning (Edey 2000; Jevne 1999). This would suggest we can understand knowledge of hope in much the same way as Clandinin and Connelly (1998) understood teacher knowledge - as stories lived, told, and retold. The value of narrative inquiry is enhanced when we "go beyond the simple recounting of a story to a more educative practice of retelling and reliving stories with imaginative possibilities" (Whelan, et al., 2001, p.1). This echoes the approach prescribed in hope-focused counselling (Edey, 2000) where the listener makes a conscious choice to listen to and engage with the teller in imagining hopeful ways of retelling a story. By using the language of hope (Edey, 2000), the listener helps to make visible the hopeful possibilities in the stories. Hope is enhanced through the exchange and the teller can relive the story from this new perspective.

Although relatively new, convergent interviewing is an increasingly popular interview technique that attempts to reconcile an existing dilemma in qualitative research; that is, how to collect and represent data in a way that is credible without compromising the phenomenological essence of qualitative research. Convergent interviewing is data-driven. The interest is in letting the interviewee do the talking and letting the emerging data guide the interview (Dick, 2000). Following a very broad opening question that invites the respondent to talk for an extended period of time, the interviewer formulates subsequent questions driven by the responses themselves. The data is checked and rechecked with the respondent with special attention to disconfirmation (Attwater & Hase, 2004). This allows for rich inductive analysis through which categories, themes and patterns can emerge.

A third strategy chosen for this particular study was the use of photo-assisted interviewing. Photographs have the capacity to make sense of subjective experience by shedding light on taken-for-granted assumptions not normally scrutinized in the day-to-day business of life (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1998; Ziller, 1990). Photo-assisted interviewing (Gastkins & Forte, 1995) refers to the practice of having participants take photographs in response to the question at hand (in this case, regarding their personal connections to hope) and to narrate the significance of the photograph through a typically semi-structured interview. Photo-assisted interviewing is distinct from photo-interviews (Collier & Collier, 1986) in that the photographs are generated by the participants rather than the researcher.

Beliefs often operate on a tacit or subconscious level, and although deeply held, may prove to be difficult to articulate without some assistance. Photographs offer rich images that can serve to clarify the expression of subjective experiences, often eliciting hidden beliefs (Taylor, 2002). The photographs provide a framework for the ideas to be discussed, while the words provide a framework to contextualize the photographs. Although photography has been systematically applied as a research tool in other disciplines including in the study of hope (Gastkins & Forte, 1995; Parkins, 1997; Strebchuk, Gurnett, & Wong, 1995), it is a somewhat novel venture in the adult education enterprise (Jevne, Nekolaichuk, & Boman, 1999).

The use of participant-generated photographs in research is to address the research question from a phenomenological perspective. A phenomenological study focuses on descriptions of what people experience and its aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the essence of that lived experience. It requires that a researcher capture and describe as fully as possible how people perceive, describe, feel about, and make sense of a phenomenon, in this case, hope (Patton, 2002). Photographs convey the phenomenon from the vantage point of the photographer, who holds the power to choose points of view that illuminate varying aspects of the unfolding story.

Using photographs in research is an effective way to encourage reflective learning. McDonald and Krause in a 1995 study (Taylor, 2002) found that "looking at and sharing completed photographic images provides further opportunities to reflect and possibly differentiate, reinforce, or elaborate existing meaning perspectives ... Such reflective opportunities may also facilitate the creation of new meanings" (Taylor, 2002, p. 126). In telling their hope stories first in photograph form, and then retelling them in the interview process, participants not only interpreted them for the researcher but had the potential to come to a deeper understanding of their hope and how it impacted their worldview.

The importance of context when dealing with photographs cannot be understated. Interpretation and analysis must be "grounded in the interactive context in which the photographs acquired meaning" (Schwartz, 1989). Photographs alone can be interpreted in a host of different ways which may or may not have any connection to a participant's truth. Therefore, many researchers support a combined approach employing both photographs and the narratives that accompany them as a way to invite open expression (narratives) while maintaining concrete reference points (photos) (Taylor, 2002; Ziller, 1990). In this way, the researcher engages with the phenomenon, with the potential to 'see' and 'feel' along with the participant (Ziller, 1990). This ability to share the lived experience of the participant is fundamental to phenomenological research.

Visual research, like all research, "depends on and redistributes social power" (Harper, 2000, p. 727). Lessons gleaned from early anthropological studies show us how photographs are not objective specimens of scientific study but representative of the power relationships between photographer and subject (Harper, 2000). By placing the camera in the hands of participant rather than researcher, increased power rests in the hands of the participant, but this does not reconcile other power differentials that impact the act of photography. As Harper (2000) explains, "I can enter the worlds of the poor by living temporarily on the street, and photograph the worlds I encounter there, but a homeless person cannot infiltrate and photograph the life of my university president" (p.728). In spite of these shortcomings, photo-assisted research practices can take a step toward more empowerment for participants because it affords a space for dialogue and reflexive learning. The choice here to provide a venue for men and women, teachers and learners, and people from mainstream culture as well as from marginalized cultures to co-explore the meaning of hope in the context of their relationship in education was a deliberate attempt to mitigate this inequity.

Author and reader alike hold personal philosophies that determine the criteria with which a work will be assessed. Qualitative research boasts a myriad of approaches -phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutics, heuristics, realism, grounded theory, critical and feminist theory and more. This reminds us of the contrasting sets of criteria for evaluating qualitative inquiry and the various philosophical perspectives that they serve. Patton (2002) categorizes five alternate sets of criteria and outlines the frameworks that would guide the evaluation and analysis of a research work. These are criteria compatible with traditional scientific research, social constructivist theory, artistic and evocative approaches, or a critical framework. While categories sometimes overlap, and at other times compete, researchers unavoidably make choices about which framework to apply to the work, whether they are conscious of this or not.

The borders between these genres are often blurred and researchers frequently cross boarders, thereby broadening the 'acceptable' in research and highlighting the tensions and contradictions in the lived experience of researchers and their subjects of study (Patton, 2002). Like Burdell and Swadner (1999, in Patton, 2002), I confess myself to be a 'boarder crosser'. I use a framework that relies on both constructivist criteria (trustworthiness, triangulation, reflexivity) and critical change criteria (engage in equal power relations, critical perspective, build capacity for action) (Patton, 2002). It is against these criteria that I will monitor the quality and credibility of this work.

Issues of Credibility and Rigor

Various authors in educational research define trustworthiness in different ways. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use trustworthiness as the qualitative parallel for the more positivist concepts of validity and reliability (Mertens, 1998; Wellington, 2000). Trustworthiness encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the context of qualitative research, credibility is the term used to parallel the quantitative notion of internal validity (Mertens, 1998). Under this broad concept are several criteria for establishing credibility, including two that are particularly relevant to this research project: credibility of the researcher and triangulation.

Crystallization and Triangulation

Triangulation was developed to overcome some of the difficulties in the fieldwork of research (Schostak, 2002). Triangulation is the act of comparing and contrasting multiple data sources, observers, methods and / or theories. In the 70's, scholars such as Shapiro and Trend advocated for triangulation as a way to reconcile the tensions between qualitative and quantitative modes of inquiry (Patton, 2002). In this age of postmodernist thought, some, like Guba and Lincoln (1989, in Mertens, 1998), reject triangulation because of its tendency to elevate the status of consistency of findings over the notion of multiple realities. Nonetheless, triangulation in all its forms has a strong historical presence in the discourse of educational research (Hittleman & Simon, 2002; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002; Schostak, 2002; Wellington, 2000).

As researchers and research practices move into the new millennium with an emphasis on critical approaches to research and a seemingly endless bank of paradigms and perspectives, new criterion for judging the quality of research are emerging as well. Janesick (2000) extrapolates on Richardson's notion of crystallization as a better metaphor with which to evaluate research. Abandoning the triangle with its limited and unchanging three point structure, crystallization accepts the multi-faceted perspectives of any given approach as an undeniable reality.

Patton (2002) might say this research design employed three types of triangulation – triangulation of data sources, theory triangulation and member checks.

Source triangulation is the process of verifying consistency of responses gathered at different times and by different means. The combination of responses from group interviews, private interviews, stories, journaling, and the photographic representations provided well-rounded, verifiable data and bolstered the credibility of the findings.

Theory triangulation involves the use of different theoretical perspectives to interpret the same data. I interrogated the meaning of hope in the transformative learning experiences of this group by holding up their representations of their personal experiences against the constructs proposed in hope theory and transformative learning theory. Looking at where the data fit, and perhaps do not fit, within the presenting theories offers some insight to where these divergent constructs might complement or inform one another. With hope and integrity, this approach holds the promise of "producing different knowledge and producing knowledge differently" (St. Pierre, 2000).

Member checks are used as a matter of course in collaborative and participatory research (Patton, 2000). This involves allowing those who were studied to review the findings and interpretations. This can be an important form of triangulation, although some consternation still exists for researchers who worry that that allowing participants to view the findings could potentially undermine the independence of the study (Patton, 2000). In this study, collaborative inquiry is not only desirable as a strategy for enhancing the quality of the analysis, but necessary as part of the power sharing that is integral to emancipatory research. Both teacher and learner participants were given the opportunity to review and comment upon the findings. They also were active and integral participants in the emergent direction of the research, given the data-driven, conversational interview style.

So, while some may view this extensive use of triangulation as evidence of rigor and credibility, as researcher and participant in this study, I balk somewhat at the clear cut lines of triangulation, and am wary that such neat categories may infringe on the worth of this study. Janesick (2000) coins the term "*methodolatry,* a combination of *method* and *idolatry*" (p. 390) to describe an over-preoccupation with the research method at the expense of an authentic understanding of the lived experience of the research participants. Crystallization seems a more fitting metaphor to capture the ever-fluid refractions produced as I contemplate hope through stories, interview questions, photographs, relationship, and reflection.

Researcher Credibility

Another prism through which to view the integrity of a research project is one of researcher credibility (Patton, 2002). "Because the researcher is the instrument in a qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report should include some information about the researcher" (Patton, 2002, p. 566). This seems particularly pertinent to this research topic and design.

Every researcher has a healthy bias and reflecting on this bias is part of the business of research (Wellington, 2000). This involves reflecting critically on all aspects of the research process, from the formulation of questions, to deciding on methods, to choosing a sample. Reflexivity is a sub-component of reflectivity (Wellington, 2000). Reflexivity refers to the specific reflections that involve the researcher and his/her impact on the research, making explicit the fact that there is an irreducible relationship between researcher and the research act itself (Wellington, 2000). There is much discussion about the appropriateness and expediency of including this reflexive aspect of reflection in the written account of research. While I can concur with Wellington (2000) that a researcher's reflexive musings may not hold the same merit for the written report and should be limited to brief and *relevant* information, I argue that the relevance of such dynamics is more pivotal in some contexts than in others – and this research endeavour would seem to be a prime example of a context where the assumptions of the researcher and ways in which the researcher negotiates power imbalances would have a significant influence on the integrity of the study.

Because of the highly personal and subjective nature of this study, I think it is very important to say who I am, why I am motivated to explore hope, and what personal perspectives have woven their way into my interaction with both the participants and the data.

I have been involved for the past 22 years in the field of ESL in a variety of capacities: teacher, counsellor, administrator, friend, and activist. As I commit to this research, my work is ongoing in all these areas. My ancestors originated from Eastern Europe, but as that was four or five generations ago, I do not consider myself to have any experiential knowledge of the immigration experience. I have, however, travelled extensively, living for some periods of time in foreign countries. This has afforded me some understanding of the awkward and awesome enlightenments one encounters when immersed in strange languages and cultures. I have also studied both French and Spanish and so have a lived experience of negotiating meaning across languages from both sides of the interchange. Thus, my experience in this domain means that I do not have the unfettered "gaze of the tourist, bemused with a sense of bizarre cultural practices" (Silverman, 1989, p.220); yet that very experience cautions me against rushing into rash conclusions based on assumption.

As mentioned in the introduction to this work, it was a personal crisis that acted as a catalyst for my passion for the study of hope. My personal trauma helped me to identify more closely with the trauma that had been part of the fabric that was the backdrop of my work - teaching disenfranchised refugees for some of whom trauma was a chronic condition. I began to see connections between trauma, hope, and personal transformation in my own life and saw those connections mirrored in the hope research done with terminally ill people. I wondered if and how such intersections could be found in the ESL venue, and discovered that research relating to hope and education was rather skimpy. I was determined to understand this phenomenon better and see if the intentional use of hope in the practice of ESL could promote transformative learning in ways similar to those described by hope scholars, terminally ill patients and their families, and my own personal journey through trauma.

One of the dramatic results of my own intention toward hope is my leaning toward a more critical stance of adult education. I believe that any research can serve to perpetuate or impugn the status quo, thus making all research political. This reality demands all endeavours in the field of education be caressed with the touch of an emancipatory approach because ignoring the political, perhaps inadvertently but surely unavoidably, serves to perpetuate oppression. There is no neutral ground.

Limitation and Delimitation

Researching a topic as ethereal as hope is sure to be fraught with problems. Research involving critical theory or an emancipatory paradigm often escapes simple empirical methods. Neither hope nor perspective transformation allow themselves to be readily observed. This challenge calls for rigorous research practice, intense but gentle critique, and cooperation between researcher and audience in making meaning from the research.

To make this task more manageable, certain constraints were placed on the study at the outset. The learner participants eligible for this study were limited to only those who were, or had been, studying under government sponsorship. The intent here was to limit the study to refugees and landed immigrants who were uprooted due to war or other causes beyond their control - circumstances that robbed them of time needed for financial planning and securing family support structures. Consequently, the experiences of hope may play out differently for learners under extreme personal stress than they might in the case of the economic or academic immigrant to Canada. This is not to negate the importance or relevance of the hopeful, transformative experiences of any groups of learners, but rather is a means to reduce at least some of the variables at play in this research.

Some hope research focuses on measuring hope levels (Snyder, 1995); other research interests focus more on understanding the personal meaning of hope (Nekolaichuk, Jevne, & Maguire, 1999); still others are designed to explore the use of hope in counselling (Edey, & Jevne, 2003). This study did not make an attempt to quantify hope in any way. That is to say I did not attempt to measure or compare the hope levels in the participants. Rather, this work is exploratory in nature, seeking a uniquely personal description of how ESL learners and teachers experience hope in their lives and in their education practices.

One limitation in this study may be that, although every effort was made to keep interviews open-ended and allow freedom to the participants to disclose experiences, impressions and themes as they emerged, there was assuredly in this type of research, some measure of researcher influence. Returning to Edey (2000) who explains the power the listener holds in the dialogue of storytelling, a researcher looking at hope through the prism of hope is certain to have some impact on the responses. This I say unapologetically, as it is this very dialogue of hope that constitutes the emancipatory nature of this project. I made every endeavour to account for this influence through the analysis of a personal journal that I kept during the research project.

Using photographs in research brings its own set of limitations to the project. As discussed earlier, power imbalances can limit the range of options open to expression by the photographer. More salient in this project, however, was the fact that photography requires time and energy, and most of these working adults had little of either to devote to the project. Two participants actually declined to participate in this aspect of the research, citing time as one reason. Another constraint that photography brought was a certain apprehension about not being able to 'do it right', that is, find appropriate subject matter or take an appealing picture. This was much alleviated in the initial focus group interview when participants were able to ask questions and air their concerns.

There are other design constraints inherent in this methodological approach. Admittedly, the sample size was small and the data may be difficult to generalize to learners and educators in other contexts and circumstances. The payoff is in the rich descriptions that can be attained with the in-depth and multi-faceted data collection. Cronbach and Associates (in Patton, 2002) echo others in the field (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) who propose a middle ground in the paradigmatic debate over generalizability of findings. Between experimental designs that are so controlled as to negate any relevance beyond the strict confines of the experimental situation, and purely idiosyncratic designs, lies the space in which one can "balance depth and breadth, realism and control so as to permit reasonable extrapolation" (Cronbach & Associates in Patton 2002, p.584). The term extrapolation connotes a logical, thoughtful and modest speculation about how the findings may apply in other, similar situations. Such extrapolations rely heavily on thick descriptions (Guba & Linclon, 1985) of the sample context and design and this should be made possible in this inquiry.

Research Procedure

Prior to Data Collection

Many educational researchers agree on the crucial importance of piloting the research questions (Mertens, 1998; Patton, 2002; Wellington, 2000). While no formal pilot study was conducted for this research, many informal conversations with ESL learners were held as a way of foreshadowing potential problems with the study and especially with the language used in the study. Preparatory conversations were also held with experienced researchers from the Hope Foundation to flesh out the most appropriate ways to prompt, but not direct, meaningful discussions on the topic of hope. Before embarking on the actual research, the questions were informally piloted with ESL teachers and learners with whom this researcher already has good rapport. Some modifications to wording, order, and style to facilitate ease and accuracy were discussed and explored. In the end I felt confident that the language chosen for the questions was at once simple enough not to confuse a second language speaker, and not so simple as to compromise the depth of response that was sought in this study, nor confine culture-bound responses that I have no way of imagining. They also kept open the possibility for dialogue (in the Freirean sense) about hope, in the context of hope, without artificially leading the responses.

Researchers in fields that cross cultures face an additional burden of responsibility in reliably accessing and reporting data in situations of multicultural and linguistic diversity (King, 2000). Thoughtful consideration was given to these concerns and thus the decision was taken to include photography as an avenue to better articulate those experiences of hope and transformation which are at once most profound and most elusive to the linguistic expression available to the second language speaker.

In researching across cultures and across languages, the presentation of questions is a serious consideration, and this goes well beyond merely paying careful attention to wording. While I agree with Patton (2002) and Wellington (2000), who suggest that precise interview questions are not necessary and may in fact be too restrictive as they push the researcher into a single mode of question, my twenty plus years experience teaching, conversing with, and sharing life with people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds has sensitized me to the insidious way that miscommunication occurs when the assumptions that underlie language and culture are not always held in forefront for ongoing scrutiny in the process of dialogue. Therefore, I developed a list of guiding questions to focus my inquiry and, with the exception of a few specific questions (see Appendix 1), left the rest of the questions to emerge in the interview in direct response to the stories and photographs.

The Question

The guiding question of this research is shaped this way: What do adult ESL learners and teachers say about their notions of hope, with particular reference to the relationship of hope to their learning experiences?

In order to seek the answer to this broad question, the following detailed questions were used to shape the interrogation of the reflections, stories, and images which were collected as data.

- What are the critical incidents that enhanced, diminished, or made visible the hope of this sample group?
- Is there any discernible relationship between the hope of instructors and the hope of learners?
- How can an understanding of hope inform our understanding of the transformative learning process?
- Can hope itself be an emancipatory process and, if so, how aware of the emancipatory nature of the hoping process are those that hope?

The Participants

In qualitative research, a variety of purposeful sampling is available, including cluster sampling, intensity sampling, homogeneous sampling, representative sampling, and critical case sampling (Hatch, 2002; Hittleman & Simon, 2002; Wellington, 2000). Critical case sampling was chosen to guide the selection of participants for this project. Critical case sampling involves carefully selecting participants who reflect the special case that is the focus of the study (Wellington, 2000). In this project the critical case constituted learners and teachers involved in the enterprise of adult ESL. Invitations to participate were made to ESL classes, groups of teachers, and to individuals either by the researcher or by colleagues in the field who were aware of the project.

Several people came forward indicating interest and I had to make some decisions about whom I would call back. Language level was one consideration. Selection of the learner participants was limited to those at intermediate or advanced ESL levels. The language level limitation was imposed to avoid the use of interpreters. The level of fluency of an intermediate ESL learner, combined with the researcher's experience as an ESL teacher, and the use of stories augmented by photographs offered a reasonable expectation that meaning-making could occur. The choices I made about who to call were also influenced by my intent to include both men and women from a variety of ethnic and language groups. Although I had originally planned to include four learner participants and two teacher participants, in the end I included five learners because they showed an enthusiasm for the project that I could not refuse.

A total of seven participants were included in this study including three current ESL students, two former ESL students, and two ESL teachers. In the second phase of the project another student, upon hearing of the study from one of the others, called and asked if he could participate. I had to decline as the sample size was becoming cumbersome and I felt it was too late in the process to make additions. The sample was comprised of four women and three men, each from a different ethnic background, and all between the ages of 28 and 68.

Lastly, the individual researcher wishes to acknowledge herself as a participant in the study as I believe the colours that define my own notion of hope cannot help but leave their hues on this project.

Procedure for Data Collection

There were four phases in the process of data collection. Participants were each provided with a disposable camera, and a small journal that was to become their hope journal. They were instructed to write two stories from their lives that illustrate hope. They were also invited to write any other musings or reflections about hope as they occurred over the course of the study. Some wrote everyday for the first week, some wrote sporadically. The three male participants wrote nothing at all, explaining in the interview that they had thought about the two stories and preferred to just tell them to me in person. With regards to the camera, participants were instructed to take photos of anything they wished that related to hope in some way. These could be things or people, metaphors or reminders of stories where hope was present. Again two participants declined to use photography, indicating that they lacked the time to accomplish this task and felt that their sense of hope could be best represented in other ways.

The two focus group meetings were held in a central location at an ESL institution. Some of the individual interviews were also held there, but in other instances participants requested that we meet in their homes, or at their own schools. In consideration of the time commitment I was asking of them, and because few of the participants owned cars, I was happy to oblige this request. Both focus group meetings were nearly two hours in length. The individual interviews were each approximately ninety minutes, however, in two cases the conversations went a little over two hours due to passionate and personal conversation that I felt should not be interrupted.

Phase 1: Focus Group

To introduce the project, I began with a focus group with the five learner participants and two teacher participants. In this two-hour focus group session, I used a workshop model to open the investigation into hope and to familiarize the participants with the use of photography in this venture. As anticipated, the participants were initially unsure about the parameters of what I meant by *hope*. They wanted to know exactly what I was asking, and by the end of the group discussion, hope exploration activities, and questions, they felt more at ease with their project. Each participant was given a disposable camera to take with them to record their images of hope. They were asked to record two narratives relating to hope and to record in the form of a journal any critical events or memories, either in or out of the ESL classroom, that related to their sense of hope.

Phase 2: First Individual Interviews

After two weeks, I met with each participant for an individual interview. This is the moment when I first viewed their photographs and listened to the narratives which accompanied them. The interview was informal so that the data could shape the interview. This study was intentionally exploratory and I did not wish to limit the range of response with an interview style that was too directive. At the end of the interview, the participant was given a second opportunity to capture pictures or stories that would add detail and depth to some of their expressions of hope. Recordings of the interviews, my notes and reflections written during and immediately following the interview, the participant-generated photos, and the journal entries that the individual participants chose to share with the project form the data for analysis.

Phase 3: Second Individual Interviews

Again after two weeks, I interviewed participants individually to enrich, clarify, and deepen my understanding of their portrayals of hope. Themes that emerged in the initial interviews were verified and rechecked, with special attention to areas of disconfirmation both within the individual responses and across the scope of participants. Once again I let the participants guide the interview, allowing them to elaborate their descriptions on how they experienced and conceptualized hope. I did ask some direct questions to clarify or verify interpretations I arrived at from the earlier interviews. I asked permission to keep the hope journals and together with the participants decided which photographs might be included in the final work.

Phase 4: Final Focus Group/ Sharing our Learning

The study concluded with a group interview with two purposes. One was to acknowledge and celebrate the impact of the research on this community of participants. Participants were invited to share with each other their stories of hope, and to share with one another what they had learned about hope. The second purpose of the group interview was to explore the extent to which the act of doing hope research itself was transformational or hope-enhancing for the participants. As in the initial focus group interview, I used a workshop model which provided focussed activities followed by group discussion to accomplish this.

Data Analysis

All the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, which enabled me to re-visit the interchange and clarify the impressions and notes I had gathered therein. The semi-structured interviews, some of which were enhanced with accompanying photos, were based on convergent interviewing techniques (Dick, 1999; 2000) which recommend that the researcher open the interview with a broad question that encourages the participant to talk at length with little direction. This helps establish rapport and ensures that participants are able to talk about what is truly relevant to them. The interviews also relied heavily on stories, rich in descriptive detail and oftentimes repetitive, consistent with established traditions in hope research (Edey, 2000; Jevne, 1999). In other words, the participants were not merely asked to give succinct answers to specified questions. This interview style prompted me to modify the transcription process slightly.

Not all of sections of the recordings were transcribed verbatim. When stories began to meander, and especially when they were being retold, I referenced the story without transcribing that section. In the analysis, I examined the transcriptions, but did not rely solely on the written documentation. Instead, I used the written transcriptions as both data, and a map for the audio data, using them to locate stories that I wanted to re-hear. In listening to the stories themselves and not relying on the written text alone, I could remain more sensitive to the meanings that are communicated in story but can be lost in the written form – meanings that come from utterances, pauses, laughter, and tone of voice. This traversing back and forth between stories written and stories told, combined with reflection on notes taken during and immediately after each interview helped me to make sense of the data and to minimize distortion of what was presented to me.

I used an inductive analytical approach to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the data. I relied on 'bracketing' techniques derived from Denzin (1989) and recommendations from convergent interviewing practice (Dick, 1999) to create a framework from which to approach the analysis. Bracketing is a process of interpretation which includes five steps. In line with these steps, I first located statements and key phrases within the transcripts, stories, and photographs that spoke directly about hope or transformation. I then used my own journal, my notes taken during and after the interviews, and the re-listening of tapes to reflect on and interpret the meanings with as much integrity to the participants' truth as possible. After my initial reflection, I checked my interpretations with the participants in the second interview and flushed out deeper more specific dimensions to their impressions of hope. I then made good use of post-it notes to itemize the recurring features and to group and regroup the topics under different essential themes. I kept my own hope journal throughout the process, and because I was careful to record my own thoughts, feelings, and experiences during and after the interviews, I was able to not only 'bracket' the themes unveiled by the participants, but also to 'bracket' what I conceived hope to be and 'bracket' the personal impressions I had during the process in order that I could keep abreast of how either or both were intersecting with the study. After considerable interaction with the data in this way, I felt comfortable with proposing tentative statements about how the participants conceptualize and experience hope, and how that hope may come into play when transformative learning takes place. At the same time, I was resistant to fitting all the data into neat categories. Hope is a very individual experience that cannot always be categorized and the qualities that define hope for one individual can, without generalizing to a larger population, tell us something of value about hope.

The strategies outlined in convergent interviewing (Attwater & Hase, 2004; Dick, 1999) also guided the analysis, particularly with reference to disconfirming opinions. As suggested in this approach, in the second interview and the final focus group meeting, I probed those areas that were unique to a certain individual or diverged from ideas that were relatively consistent for the rest of the sample.

I deemed the addition of photographs to the query especially useful in the context of this topic of hope and transformative learning. I assumed that possibly some participants would have readily available perspectives about hope. At the same time, I anticipated some significant beliefs about hope may be inchoate ideas that would be most truly revealed after some experience of 'conscientization'. This was introduced in the workshop activities of the initial focus group and attended to within the dialogue between researcher and participant. For some of the participants - the learner population - I had to consider the added encumbrance of needing to express deep ideas in a second language. Photography seems an appropriate way to mediate this challenge.

I was cautious not to 'read into' the photographs. The visual and symbolic representations provided to me were solely in the charge of the participants to share and illuminate to the extent that they chose. I, was, however, open to noticing themes that run through a participant's photographs, or across the photographic images of different participants. In the analysis, I paid as much attention to what was expressed as to what was ignored.

In employing these careful techniques in the analysis, I was able to answer the challenge of qualitative research to present "solid, descriptive data, so that the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience under study" (Janesick, 2000, p.390).

Ethical Considerations

Emancipatory research invites and facilitates avenues of change and with the potential for deep meaning and profound change comes the potential for great exploitation. So, the emancipatory researcher must pay rigorous attention to ethical considerations.

Narratives about experience cannot be taken "as 'brute data', transparent in their meaning" (Campbell, 2003). As a researcher purposely working through hope, I irrevocably enter and affect the narratives. Nonetheless, I tried to respond to the stories in the listening and the retelling by taking a stance described by Thomas (in Campbell, 2003) as moral deference. This calls me to be true to the essence of the expression whether or not it resonates with my personal perspective. Thomas adds that the moral obligation of a listener and interpreter of narratives is to "render salient what was salient for her in the way it was salient for her" (p. 233). By having the participants respond to the images, narratives, and interpretations that I heard and retold, I learned a great deal about the accuracy, fairness, and authenticity of the data I gathered. In addition, in keeping a journal detailing an audit trail of all the interchanges, and reflections, I was able to maintain a vigilant awareness about my own impact on that expression.

Secondly, as an emancipatory researcher, it is incumbent upon me to be aware of and responsive to issues of power. It was after much reflection and dialogue that I purposefully designed a research project that invited individuals from different places of power within the master narrative of the West to participate as equals in a research project. The ethical implications of this choice demand that the power to decide the nature and extent of the disclosure must be honoured for each individual.

Participants in any study have the right to privacy. The individuals in this study were given a promise of anonymity within their schools, families, and ethnic communities and the identity of the participants was protected as much as possible through the use of pseudonyms. Other identifying features, however, such as country of origin and religion could not be camouflaged without seriously compromising the integrity of the findings. They were just too embedded in the essence of the stories. The participants were made aware of this in the initial focus group meeting. The photos included in this work were used with permission of the participants and with signed authorization from any persons in the photographs. Also, in keeping with standard ethical practice in research (Wellington, 2000), I secured written consent from each participant that they understood:

a) the nature and the purpose of the study
b) how and why they were selected to participate
c) that they can withdraw their consent at any time without prejudice or sanctions

Before embarking on the project, I filed an Ethical Review Application with the Department of Educational Policy Studies and the University of Alberta and received approval from the Ethics Review Committee.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMAGES AND STORIES OF HOPE

The purpose of this research was to investigate what adult ESL learners and teachers say about their notions of hope, with particular reference to the relationship of hope to their learning experiences. The two dimensions of this question elicited findings in two separate areas. Regarding the notion of hope, the data suggest four distinct themes that describe the nature of hope. Secondly, because the project was imbedded in the context of the ESL enterprise, it also provided insight into how hope comes to play in the ESL experiences of teachers and learners.

As described in Chapter Three, I relied on four main data sources – individual interviews, focus groups, photographs, and narratives. I used photographs to anchor the interview process and found this to be very useful in relaxing the participant and facilitating better dialogue. To place the focus of the interview on externalized images rather than on the individual seemed to invite freer expression from the participant.

I did not analyze each data source in isolation. I traveled back and forth between the written transcripts, the taped interviews, and the photographic images to allow the full range of intellectual, visual, and audio information to be the source of my descriptions and interpretations. In addition, I considered my own observations and reflections in attending to the ways my influence and intentional use of hope affected the disclosure of the participants. The following results are based on a synthesis of insights garnered in the analysis of the data.

The responses of these participants clustered around four general themes that I have named the *Nature of Hope*. The findings will be presented under the following headings: the *Existential Nature of Hope*; the *Relational Nature of Hope*; the *Realistic Nature of Hope* and *the Transformative Nature of Hope*. In addition, as a result of focusing on ESL learners and teachers, data emerged regarding the specific relationship of hope to the ESL enterprise and this will be reported separately. Content from the hope journals was read, interpreted, and discussed with the participants so the findings are intermingled with the findings from the interviews, and, as with the interviews, are reported under either general themes which reflect a universal impression of hope or as unique impressions expressed by individual participants.

The photographs, and the narratives that accompany them, also made their way into the content of the interviews and were not analyzed as separate entities. The messages they relate are incorporated into the overall body of the data. However, to adequately convey the breadth of the participants' impressions of hope, it was important to include samples of the photographic representations. The photographs, along with direct quotes from the participants, offer the reader a truer picture of the emotive, intuitive, and metaphoric dimensions of hope and so are included in the body of this chapter as significant findings.

The experience and impressions of hope are uniquely individual. It would be difficult to adequately interpret the nature of hope as perceived by these individuals without some understanding of the context from which they view hope. To begin, I will briefly introduce each participant and then present a personal story of hope from each one. Presenting their thoughts on hope as expressed in their own words will provide deeper insight into the unique individuals and a richer context in which to view the findings.

Introducing the Participants

Maria, student from Sierra Leone

Maria is a woman her late 30's. When the rebels invaded her village, they left her a widow with five children. After the invasion she shepherded her five children across the border and into a refugee camp in Ghana. For four years the family lived there in grueling poverty and hardship, while Maria acted as President of the Camp. She worked closely with the United Nations and various other NGOs to secure food and other basic necessities for the refugees. She has been in Canada for two years and is a full time ESL student.

Well, it is important to keep hoping because since you have the life, just like what I'm telling you, if there is life, you have hope. I have seen many people they have suffered in their lives. Even like me. Now I have hope everyday because I was not expecting even to be alive. I was in the refugee camp, sleeping in the tent when the rain come, sometimes the breeze takes the tent off. Midnight. Cracking. Me and my children move the food closer or it will get wet. I used to sleep in a bed. When the rains comes the bed is leaking. Today, because I didn't lose my hope now I am here. I have good place to sleep.

Hong, student from Cambodia

Hong is a pharmacist in his early 40's, married, and a father to four children. He immigrated to Canada about twenty years ago after suffering through both the Khmer Rouge regime and the subsequent Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Hong was only in grade ten when he was forced out of high school and into a refugee camp. He began to teach himself English in the camp and after he arrived in Canada, entered ESL classes and then university.

To understand my hope, first of all you have to understand a little bit of Buddhism because a lot of Cambodian culture, the behavior and the action are influenced by Buddhism. I'm Cambodian, I'm not Buddhist, however a lot of my thinking, the way I related to other people, how I act, is without doubt influenced by Buddhism because Buddhism is practiced by a lot of Cambodians so it influenced their behavior. It influenced their character and they don't even know they are being influenced by Buddhism. So basically to understand Buddhism to some extent may understand where my hope come from. I'm not Buddhist. But my philosophy of life tends to... I've been influenced by society in which I live and now that I have come to Canada, it does change but it doesn't change drastically because the core fundamental what I believe a person's hope has always been there, starting from day one. I have never thought of it, deeply, but it has always been on my mind.

Yang, student from Vietnam

Yang is a woman in her 60s and retired from her job in a garment factory after over 25 years of full time employment. For ten years of that tenure, Yang participated in ESL classes offered by her company. She studied for an hour and half each day after her shift. She continues to improve her English in a special ESL class for seniors. Shortly after immigrating to Canada she was divorced and raised her three children on her own. All three children successfully completed university here in Canada.

This word hope is wonderful. It looks simple but you think sometimes... it's very big. Sometimes I think if people without hope they no improvement. No hope. They have no hope. If you have hope then you would struggle and get your success, get your target, get your aim.

Sometimes I don't eat much. If I go out with [my friends] *they say "You eat. You eat." Then, I eat a little bit more. This is hope. I have these feelings because you eat and I like my friends eat a lot. They make me eat a little bit more, that's good for me.*

Sarim, student from Iran

Sarim is a man in his early 50's who works as a bus driver. In Iran, Sarim lived with his wife and two young daughters, and worked as an auto mechanic instructor before being forced to flee Iran in the dead of night because of religious persecution. Sarim and his family faced a horrendous journey across the border to Pakistan and continued to struggle for several years in a refugee camp. In 1985, he and his family immigrated to Canada and Sarim began studying ESL and later, upgrading. Although his teachers recognized his intelligence and encouraged him to continue on to college, he felt his first responsibility was to support his family so he chose instead to find full time employment.

But probably the best story, as soon as I came here to Canada, in Edmonton, and I started going to school I felt in love with this bus driving job. I don't know why. I said I would to be a bus driver here in Canada and I love it! And it was one of my best gets or hope or wishes at that time. Anyway, I got this job after 17 years! Can you believe that? After seventeen years ... and my hope or my wish or whatever you call it came true and I've been driving for Edmonton Transit for three years. It was one of biggest hopes. Every single day that I took a bus I wish I was on that seat. But I don't know why I loved that job. This is the only job that I never feel tired about doing it because I love... . First of all it's a kind of service to people, I'm giving service to people first of all, even though sometimes people are not nice, I love it and it's a job I never get tired of. Oh yes, for seventeen years. I kept leaving applications, going back and forth, going back and forth and Bev, she knows about this, actually she was one of the people who encouraged me and helped me with this process. She was the only one who would sit and listen to me for hours and hours. Every time, whatever I did for his job, I would come back to her and tell her the story and she would listen to me very kindly and she always gave me hope too, you know, to continue applying for this job. And when I went to the interview, I remember, those people, three people sitting there asking me questions. One of them asked, "Okay, if you don't get this job, then what happens?" I said, "I'm going to come back again. You will see me again. I've been looking for this job for 17 years. Now I am here. I *been to this point. If I don't pass this interview, you will see me again for sure." And they all laugh.*

Joseph, student from Romania

Joseph is a 29 year old man, married, no children, who has only lived in Canada for about half a year. In his homeland he was an accountant with a university degree in Economics. He was able to practice the English he had learned in high school while working with an international firm in Romania and so, came to Canada with strong fluency. He is studying full time in a specialized ESL program designed for immigrant accountants who wish to obtain Canadian credentials and employment in the field.

The thing that diminishes my hope is when I hear bad news about someone who didn't get a job because the supervisor was so critical and didn't like them because they were immigrants and that respective person doesn't want any such person in the office. Even we had a guest speaker here, a CMA, he's a kind of financial officer for an auto body shop and they have two or three branches and one of the students asked him, "Okay, you will hire and an immigrant?" And he said, "Probably not." At the beginning he said 'probably not'. But on the other hand a couple of years ago he hired a Romanian lady and she was very good in the position and finally she left the company for another one. He had a successful experience, but his first answer was 'not'. We are thinking "Why? Why?" Because after we will finish these course I think probably most of us will be at the same level with a Canadian student with a Bachelor Degree in Commerce. In this way if I'm hopeless, *and it's not quite hopeless, I'm speaking about these kinds of things. Somehow people tend to dis-consider newcomers. Some because they had a bad experience and some because they have a preconception. And you cannot change it.*

Angela, teacher from Canada

Born and raised in Canada, Angela is an ESL teacher of Chinese decent. Although English is her first language, she also speaks Cantonese, Mandarin and some Spanish. She is a single woman in her early 30's, has two university degrees, and has taught ESL both overseas and in Canada. She has experience teaching both children and adult learners and is currently teaching international students.

This idea of hope continually keeps popping up in my mind. I have often wondered what it really means for me to 'hope'. I know that whenever I write a message to my friends by email or give encouragement to my students, I often find myself 'hoping'.

Does this mean that I have an abundance of desires I would like to see come true? What triggers these sudden urges to 'hope' for people... I am not always sure. Somewhere inside of me tells me I would like for everyone to be happy and find peace within themselves in some way. I don't think there can ever be a limit to our desires; and perhaps that is why I hope that in some way they can be happy with the goals that they can reach.

Last week our new semester began. I knew that some of my students were returning but also that there would be a new group as well. It's possible that something was in the air... a little nervousness, some anticipation or perhaps I was *itching to have another great semester to look forward to. My previous group was a blessing. There are times when I wonder if I could have an amazing combination of people in one classroom again, I had to tell myself that you may never know who will walk in the door and not to become too overly excited. After all, teaching is all about helping people and eventually letting them go ... from school ... and then from your heart in some small way. It's hard not to become too overly attached, but I remind myself that this is how it is meant to be. I enjoy teaching for the knowledge I can impart to my students, but love teaching for the laughter we can all bring to the classroom. I think it's that laughter that triggers the hope that I have for my students.*

Janet, teacher from Canada

A woman in her early 30's, Janet is married and has a three-year-old son. She has been an ESL teacher for twelve years and enjoys working with adult immigrants and refugees. Janet was born in Canada shortly after her own parents emigrated from Hungary, so she speaks two languages and has personal experience as a member of an immigrant family.

This last story, this story of this little old man, accounts for my hope and it is tied up in the kind of love and family that I've had. You know, they weren't the best parents in the world. But still I feel I was pretty well immersed in a circle of people who had great hope in my future. There is something about that, when there are people around you that have hope in your future and they invest their lives in hoping for your future that makes you go – oh, I must be worth it. I'm worth it to someone. Someone invested their entire everything into the hope of my future and my future *success. And if I wallow around in some quagmire, what have I just done to their investment in the hope of my future? I've let them all down. Is it repaying them? I don't know.*

When I'm feeling particularly hopeless there's one significant visual that keeps me in check and puts my life problems back into perspective. It was back in 1997 or '98 at Christmas time, Christmas Eve to be exact, I, along with the rest of the population it seemed, was racing home during rush-hour traffic, bumper-to-bumper for miles. Road rage was a-plenty, including my own choice words at how late I was going to be for Christmas Eve at my godparent's house for dinner. Stuck at a red light again, my eyes wandered about and saw the angry, tired, frustrated faces of the other drivers around me, but then my eyes fell upon a scraggly looking little old man sitting all alone at the window seat of a Kentucky Fried Chicken, eating his Christmas dinner. This image is so crisp in my memory. I was late for my Christmas dinner but somehow that didn't matter. Everyone was happy just to see me when I finally showed up. My dinner was cold but the company and the love surrounding me was so warm. Somehow all the gifts that I had hoped for and wished that I would get that night seemed so unimportant. I only hoped that that little old man had, once in his life, or would still in his life remaining, feel the kind of love that I was so lucky to have all around me. And I see him, all the time, when I'm so mad and saying "why me?" This little old man on Christmas Eve.

The Problem of Language

The nature of this cross-cultural study, conducted in a second language for the majority of participants, demands some consideration of the problem of language. It is difficult enough with a culturally homogeneous group of native English speakers to come to consensus on the meanings of words such as hope, desire, wish, want, and the vast array of related concepts including optimism and hopelessness. With a group of participants who are at the same time struggling with oral fluency, this problem was exacerbated and called upon the researcher to be especially diligent in taking the time to tease out the meanings intended by the participants even when the participants stumbled over the words. In my reporting of the findings, I will use the exact words that each participant used rather than making an assumption that they intended something other. However, in cases where I believe they are using one word, but intending an alternate meaning, I will explicitly describe the basis on which I came to this conclusion.

Each participant attended two focus group meetings and two individual interviews. The purpose of the first focus group meeting was to forge a relationship between the participants that would open the door of dialogue on the subject of hope. Some of the issues around language were resolved in the first focus group but some discrepancies remained apparent throughout.

In the initial focus group meeting, participants were asked to brainstorm words they associate with the word hope. Discussion ensued as to what I meant by the word 'hope' and how I wanted them to frame their answers. I assured them that I was not after a standardized meaning for hope but that I was interested in their perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and assumptions about hope. Hope means different things for different people and its definition can be quite broad.

The participants then broke up into small groups to compile a list of first words that they associated with hopelessness and secondly, words they associated with hope. It was important the activity end with the 'hope' words because, as anticipated, the process of brainstorming the words of hopelessness led to a feeling of hopelessness. All nine of us present felt this effect and commented on it. One group's flip chart had the word 'lump' on both sides of the chart, which they explained as a heavy lump in their hearts which had grown while they were focusing on hopelessness. Then when they switched to the hope side of the chart their discussion led them to add lump there to - as in the lump in your throat when you are overwhelmed by strong positive emotion. They dubbed their chart the Good Lump/Bad Lump and shared a good laugh.

The structure of the focus group was specifically set up to enhance a communal exploration of the possible expressions and interpretations of hope, in hopes that it would free the participants from feeling conscripted into answering questions that really did not pertain to their personal sense of hope. I believe we accomplished this. Although I asked for photographs and journals to supplement the interviews, two of the seven chose not to use photographs and three declined to keep a journal. As one participant put it, "*Sure I can take a picture of a candle and tell you about how the light represents hope and when the light is blown out it's like no hope. This symbol makes sense and sounds nice but it doesn't have anything to do with what my hope is.*" I encouraged him to take a camera anyway, in case he unexpectedly noticed something in the weeks to come that did connect with his interpretation of hope but to definitely not feel compelled to come up with an artificial picture to serve my purposes. He took the camera and pleasantly returned it to me, unused, at the first interview. Another participant took only one photograph (actually several of the same flower) and seemed concerned that the symbolism would be misinterpreted. She had the weakest English of the group and was concerned that she had 'done it wrong'. The photograph she chose had a very personal significance to her sense of hope, despite being a cultural symbol of hopelessness and she was afraid that she had misinterpreted her task. I re-assured her that she had not and promised to not let the photograph stand apart from her explanation. Two participants chose to return my disposable camera and use digital photos instead. All of these cases demonstrate that the participants truly understood their license to be authentic to their own experience.

The interviews themselves revealed the problem each and every one of the participants was having with the word 'hope'. Some grappled out loud with their confusion, and for others the inconsistent terminology came out in the context of the interviews. What follows is a brief discussion of each participant's vocabulary choices.

Two native speakers (the teachers) participated in the study. For Janet, the word hope worked naturally and easily. For her, hope is "*deep down, beyond my heart... very deep core.*" She talked about hope in the abstract and contrasted it with despair or the act of despairing. She referred often to the link between hope and change, "*Her death has changed my attitude toward hope and change.*" On the other hand, Angela used 'hope', 'desires' and 'wishes' throughout the discussion in sometimes inconsistent ways. In the beginning of the interview she said "*It's hard to* *separate the different parts of hope from your own desires and wishes.*" She then used the word 'hope' in the existential sense of "*My hope is geared to making a positive impression*" as well as in the more mundane "*You're hoping for your next pretty sweater.*" The only time she reverted back to using 'desire' or 'wish' is when she was referring to something negative or selfish. When asked if hope could be a bad thing she responded, "*Sure, I guess that depends. Some people could wish... we could change that word to wish.....they would like something negative to happen to people. But a hope is always more positive.*"

Yang is a bright woman with the weakest language skills of the group. Not having an extensive vocabulary repertoire in English, Yang was unencumbered by overlapping terms such as 'desire' and 'wish'. She seemed pretty solid that whatever it was that she wanted to say about the notion of hope, could be expressed by the word 'hope'. There were other difficulties, though, due to the language barrier. For example: Interviewer: "*Do you think hope is connected to laughter*?" Yang: "*What is laughter?*" It was a comical moment that we shared but as soon as I changed the word to the verb 'laughing' she understood and was able to respond. At other times, however, I was forced to abandon questions because she simply could not understand what I was asking.

Joseph rarely used the word 'hope', or any of the other related terms in his discourse. Only when prompted by a direct question from me would he use the word 'hope' in his answer and then all but once, 'hopeless' or 'hopelessness' was the word he used. Interestingly, the only occasion where he used the word hope is when he was discussing humour: "*You will see that people who are more active, more full of* *hope, they are predisposed to laugh more.*" His responses, however, indicated that he understood easily the essence of my questions as I intended them.

Sarim stated early in the interview "*the only wish, or desire, or hope, because to me they are all the same*" and remained quite consistent most of the interview. At one point he told a story of a person who enhanced his hope and says,

> *When I saw her for the first time and I talked to her I got a kind of hope... this was hope, this was not - I can't say wish or desire. This time it was a hope.*

For the remainder of that interview and the next he used the word hope almost exclusively, only once using 'wish' as synonymous with 'hope'.

I was initially perplexed at Maria's discourse about hope. She used only the term 'hope', never opting for 'desire', or 'wish', and seemed unperturbed about definitions. She did, however use an interesting blend of the two words 'hope' and 'hopes'. At first I wondered if it was merely reckless pronunciation or grammar confusion but a deeper analysis revealed that she used each word very specifically. When she referred to "*having more hopes*", "*it raises my hopes*", "*they have hopes*", one can see from the rich context that surround the phrases that she was making references to that which some of the other participants would call desires. These hopes are tangible things, food, clothing, housing that Maria saw as something you plan for and work toward. At other times she talked about "*my hope*", "*where there is life, there is hope*", so "*I have hope*" wherein she referred to the more primal, existential essence of hope. In the first minutes of the interview she described one of her photos saying "*I hope to be more than this in the future, so I have hopes. Since there is life there is hope.*" Then her final words in the last interview were, "*If there* *is hope, life is behind the hopes.*" It seemed apparent that for Maria there are two faces to hope and she was adept at introducing and concluding our discussions reminding me of that.

Hong began very forcefully attesting that "*hope is a desire.*" He linked hope with the Buddhist notion of desire. Soon he began to tell his story and fell into using the word 'hope', "*What did I hope to accomplish? I shouldn't say hope. What did I desire to accomplish. Put it this way.*" For the bulk of the interview, he was caught up in the terminology and trying to resolve for himself the difference between 'hope' and 'desire'. The inconsistent and sometime conflicting use of the terms indicated that he is still discovering his own personal definition of hope and trying to sort out how that aligns with the cultural indoctrination of Buddhist philosophy. Near the end of the interview, he began a story by saying, very enthusiastically, "*This is a story of hope. You're going to love this story.*" As he told the story, the conversation turned to a discussion of the symbols and metaphors of hope. At this point he dropped the word 'desire' altogether, and used the word 'hope' freely and without any self-monitoring. Nonetheless, in discussing his responses, I will use his terms 'hope' and 'desire' as he uses them, with all their complexity.

The Nature of Hope

One of the intents of this research was to seek greater understanding about the way individuals experience hope. In organizing the data around the 'natures' of hope I propose a conceptual framework that exposes the personal meaning of hope and honours the uniqueness of human experience; In that way, I hope to offer a tangible framework for the intangible experience of hope.

The Existential Nature of Hope

> *Hope is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizon…It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.*
>
> Vaclav Havel from *The Politics of Hope*

When I speak of the existential nature of hope, I use the term to embrace the kind of hope of which Havel speaks. This kind of hope was salient in the stories of all the participants, save one. Only Joseph made no direct reference to the primacy of hope. A discussion of his particular responses follows shortly. As for the rest, in a variety of images and expressions, the participants described a hope that was primal and integral to the human condition; a hope that has "*always been there starting from day one*" and "*like an ever-present pilot light.*" Hope is a life force.

"*Where there is life, there is hope.*" There was consensus that hope was an energy from within that called people to participate in life. Hope is something one does not think about overtly, especially in times of strife, but an energy that keeps you going because "*you have no choice*", "*just do it.*" Sarim expressed it this way, speaking of his escape from Iran, "*We had hope and no strength, nothing basically, just take a chance.*" Angela saw these two forces as separate, "*I don't know if it was strongly hope driven, but rather a raw need to get out. Heaven knows it couldn't get any worse.*" It seems, though, that she was referring to the same compelling and inarguable force that some define as hope.

The element of risk is interesting to contemplate. The ever-present burning hope renders the individual with no choice but to respond, regardless of the expected outcome and that *having no choice* inspires hope-filled action. This is the mechanism by which people can be hopeful even when there is no guarantee of success. The innate hope that is the spark of every human being drives them forward in the face of greatest adversity and then if things turn out well the element of surprise seems to reinvigorate their hope.

Maria, who used the words 'hope' and 'hopes' for distinct purposes, had this to say: "*Well, some hope comes accidentally, unexpected, but some hopes you plan.*" Then she linked the two concepts together most eloquently when she said, "*I have hope now because I was not even expecting to be alive today but I am still alive.*" Janet recalled observing a student with a "*real lack of hope in that person's face.*" She felt she had no choice but to abandon the curriculum for that morning as she made the unexpected decision to allow this student to discuss his despair with the classmates. Both Janet and her student were surprised at the new hope that arose as a result of the conversation. Angela's hope was challenged when she was in a dead-end job and "*so I figured I had nothing to lose. People come out when you least expect it and give you some interesting ideas. That's been happening a lot to me in the last decade - unexpected surprises.*"

Evidence of the dialectic that exists between hope and hopelessness was abundant in this data. Hope and hopelessness are not mutually exclusive. Hong explained, "*If you don't know despair, you don't know hope*" and many of the responses supported this fluid connection between the two. I asked one participant what smell he associated with hope. His answer was immediate and visceral, "*The smell of my wife's perfume*". That response led him directly into a story of the hopelessness he felt with regards to his current marital difficulties. In another example, Maria told the story of her deeply hopeless feelings after rebels burnt the entire refugee camp. The theme of the story was hopelessness, but the meat of the story was about the hard work of living and rebuilding that was ongoing all through her period of despair. Be reminded that Maria was one of the participants (and there were many) who repeatedly named personal effort and hard work as indicators of hope. This demonstrates how hope and hopelessness live together in experience.

Existential hope - hope that just *is* - is tied to one's purpose in life. Each of the participants identified strongly with their unique sense of purpose in life and often reverted back to this when asked about specifics about hope. Unanimously, even in the case of Joseph, who had very little to say on the subject, hope is clearly connected to a personal sense of meaning. Each participant's hope was enhanced at times when they were living out their meaningful purpose in life.

For Joseph, his meaningful purpose was to be accomplished and successful, something that his father encouraged and supported in him. It was this father that Joseph named as the person who represented hope for him. On the contrary, Joseph was visibly emotive when he said, "*And I think the worst thing that can happen is the moment when you fail.*" Hong very directly stated that, "*hope is desire and desire is the meaning of life*" and "*if you don't have hope, what is the purpose of life?*" For the other five participants, life's purpose ranged from being true to yourself, to making each day count, to investing in your children, but in each case service to others was a dominant theme.

The interviews themselves, being based on convergent interviewing techniques were eclectic and often random; hope dialogue was iterative, always cycling back to this theme of service to others. Even in the responses of Hong and Joseph this theme emerged, albeit less overtly. Hong valued learning and education very deeply and named starting a school to inspire others to learn as a hope he has for his future. Although he did not express a desire to serve others, I would argue that his passion for teaching, his dedication to the education of his children, and his hope to teach in the future relates to work that is in the service of others. The context around Joseph's quote about 'the worst thing' emerged during our discussion about his hope being challenged if he failed to remain stoic in order to support the emotional well-being of his wife. So, for all seven participants, service to others was connected to their personal sense of meaning.

The Relational Nature of Hope

Service to others constitutes an important aspect of these people's purpose in life. It sustains and elevates hope. In other kinds of human inter-relationship, too, hope is more easily accessed, more readily experienced, more dramatically impacted when it is in relation to others.

One of the striking images was found in the choice of photographs. Five participants submitted photographic representations of hope and, of these, four were primarily pictures of people. A more in depth analysis will be forthcoming, but suffice it to say that people were a dominant theme in the photographs. The participants gave thick descriptions of the circumstances surrounding the photograph and talked about many facets of relationship as impacting hope. Family, feeling connected, laughing, listening, having a safety net, and feeling connected to their culture were all themes that emerged around the pictures. In addition, a personal connection with people who are living out their own sense of purpose was mentioned as hopeful by two participants.

In five cases, there was a single individual who was mentioned as having impacted hope. These participants had unequivocal opinions about the significant impact on hope that certain relationships had. In the other two cases, rather than an individual it was a relationship with a group of people that most supported their hope. For Yang, it was her children and her friends; for Maria, it was the people in her community who knew and respected her work.

Hope was also diminished in relation with others. When asked what diminished their hope, four participants named a person. One talked only of an incident and one participant could not identify anything. In the classroom, stories emerged showing how teachers diminished the hope of learners and learners diminished the hope of teachers. At one point, Sarim was talking about his sense of hopelessness in his present situation and concluded it with "*I am lonely here.*"

The two most dominant and tenacious themes that emerged in terms of the relational nature of hope revolved around humour and listening. Four participants spoke at length about the impact of being listened to. Yang talked about listening to her children and listening to a friend dying of cancer; both teacher participants placed great importance on listening to their students; Sarim spoke most directly:

> *she was one of those people who always listened to me and when probably I sat there you know, and I talked to her about different things, all the different things and patiently she listened to me and she encouraged me...*

The participants unanimously consented that humour in life and in the classroom was important. Unlike the theme of listening which emerged of its own accord, the participants were asked specific questions about humour and its impact in their life, their studies, and their hope. In addition, the interview process itself revealed much about humour and its relevance to hope and learning.

Sarim's story was particularly elucidating. When asked about a hopeful moment in his ESL experience he told the story of a class he was struggling in. He discussed his worries with the teacher. One day the teacher entered, returned the midterm tests, and made a funny reference to

> *a student, I won't mention his name, came to me wanting to drop the course because his English was not good enough and for your information that person got the highest mark in the test! And please shut-up and don't say anything more!*

Sarim explained that the success itself impacted his hope, but that the way the teacher joked with him also had an influence on his hope. I asked, then, if he could conclude that it was important to have humour in the classroom. He replied,

> *The teacher, she was kind of a serious teacher and that was the only time to tell you the truth she created that kind of humour, but the rest of the time, the rest of the class, no I didn't see that much from her. But that was enough for me anyway.*

After fourteen years, his strongest memory of hope was the one and only time that teacher had used humour in the class.

Yang agreed that humour holds significant power in creating and enhancing relationships between people. She, along with the other participants used words like connection, good feeling, and closeness to describe the impact of humour on relationship. Having limited English skills, Yang sometimes had difficulty adequately expressing her thoughts on such an ethereal subject as hope. When asked, "*Is laughing good for your hope?*" Yang responded this way:

> *Yes, should be good, yeah. I hope I can always laughing but can I do it? This is the question. [Both laugh] Now I'm laughing. Sometimes I don't eat much. If I go out with they say "You eat. You eat." Then, I eat a little bit more. This is hope. I have these feelings because you eat and I like my friends eat a lot. They make me eat a little bit more, that's good for me.*

When we broke for the laughter something seemed to unhook for Yang and she made an abrupt change in topic. This was her most eloquent utterance regarding hope. It was about the relational aspect of hope, not specifically about humour. So, rather than it being a direct response to the question about humour, it was an unsolicited bursting forth of her definition of hope. Her voice was confident and clear. Finally she was able to find the English she needed to speak her truth. And the stimulus was laughter.

The Realistic Nature of Hope

Authentic hope is realistic hope. It is this realism that separates hope from optimism. As discussed earlier in this work, it is not necessarily the goal of hope to be realistic; rather being realistic is the product of being genuinely hopeful. Many of the comments gathered in this research reflect the tangible, pragmatic, sensory, and logical aspects of hope. Janet puts it this way:

> *I get down but I don't want to dwell there. I think hope lets you do that. It lets you visit some yucky places because it's kind of your lifeline that's going to bring you back.*

The safety provided by hope allowed Janet to be realistic rather than fearful or avoidant when facing her difficulties.

All the participants mentioned the importance of having a goal. In fact, for Joseph, goal setting and having a reasonable expectation to achieve that goal in timely fashion was his most consistent reference to hope.

The goals varied immensely. Most were future oriented, as in the case of Maria, Hong, Yang, and Joseph who hope to improve themselves through education. Many told stories of immediate goals that were the focus when they were going through especially difficult life experiences. For example, Janet described her goal to dig out every single dandelion from her garden, and linked that to the crisis that was happening in her marriage. Maria, Sarim, and Hong, all refugees, talked about the immediate goal of getting to safety that sustained them through their ordeals. For all, having a goal was important in some aspects of their hope. In Hong's words, "*without planning, hope is dead.*"

Successfully reaching that goal was only crucial for one participant. For all the others, there was an underlying faith in the possibility of the unexpected outcome. "*Surprises happen when you least expect them*" and "*you have to change your goal*" more commonly replaced a rigid holding onto their goals.

Angela was actively trying to stop worrying so much about controlling the future and found she could reduce her fear when she reminded herself that "*surprise endings aren't necessarily bad.*" Janet says "*No matter the outcome, it will be okay.*

That's what hope does. It lets you let go of the outcome because it's impossible to know what that will be." Sarim's favorite hope story involved his surprise at getting the job after seventeen years. Maria believed that some hope comes accidentally and seemed particularly unattached to a specific goal given that she "*wasn't even expecting to be alive today.*" Hong believed that "*this desire is good for life but it has to be put in perspective, it has to be within reasonable expectation."*

Joseph was the exception. He made frequent references to attaining his goal. He says very clearly,

> *Every time I want to do something I set myself a goal. The goal is important because you know what you are running for. Otherwise, it's like fishing in the mud.*

The person who most impacted his hope was a person whose example inspired Joseph to believe that "*probably we will reach our goal, too.*" For him, hope was very future oriented because "*of course I'm thinking for the moment but all my goals are goals for the future somehow."*

In spite of a faith in accidental, uncontrollable, or unexpected outcomes, all the participants saw personal effort as an important element of hope. *"We use our legs, our energy." "People will say I am hopeful because they can see I am hard-working." "You yourself have to do it." "If you have hope then you would struggle and get your success."*

There was a circular relationship between hope and personal effort: personal effort enhanced hope, while hope provided the energy and motivation to keep going.

Hope is made more tangible through the senses. This is realistic hope in that is based in the reality of that which can be seen, or heard, or smelled, or touched.

Hope is anchored to real things. The smell most often symbolizing hope for this group was food. Four participants linked it to family, safety, life. For the three refugees, food came up often in the hope stories and was at least equal in primacy to hope.

Hope's connection to nature was also evident. Gardening, flowers, green spaces, and parks were hope symbols common to all the participants.

Participants were asked what color hope was for them. This was one of the easiest questions for them to answer. No two answers were the same and the associations made were rich:

> *White, because hope is peace and when you have hope you know peace is on the way.*
> *Blue, like the clear sky in the morning. I have my maximum energy in the morning.*
> *Green, because I think that is God's favorite colour.*
> *Yellow. Definitely yellow, although yellow is not my favorite color. But it is the color of hope.*
> *Transparent or translucent because it goes beyond what we can see.*

A curiosity emerges here. In this collective of over twenty-five hours of discussion about hope, not one single reference was made to physical contact - hugging, caressing, touch - was made! This entices further exploration.

The Transformative Nature of Hope

"Change, another ponderous word." This was the opening line in Janet's hope journal. The word change, and the theme of growth, learning, and a yearning for development figured very strongly in the stories of these participants. Change equaled hope, and hopelessness was associated with either no change or fear of

change. Not all change indicates that transformative learning has occurred. But all transformative education requires that something change. This study bears testimony that hope is part of that dialogue of change.

Because this area was at once the most fascinating and the most difficult arena to explore, I will report the findings individually for each participant, without making any further generalizations. The analysis was difficult because of the breadth of the topic; fascinating because of the frequent contradictions in the words of the participants and the incongruity between the words and actions.

A young, bright, confident professional from Romania, Joseph was the most upbeat of the group. His sense of hope was firmly rooted in his sense of personal efficacy. Since coming to Canada only a few months ago, Joseph has met with much success and unexpected good fortune. When asked if he would remain hopeful even if he encountered difficult hurdles in the future he responded,

> *Yeah, because I know I have a strong background ....and probably I would go to an employment agency in a town, or this town or whatever. Or I would move to another town, but somehow I would find another job or I would go to university or whatever but somehow I should do something. I will do something.*

One way that Joseph described hopelessness was in terms of *"not moving ahead"* or *"not changing"*. He had high hopes for his career and considered advancement significant in his sense of hopefulness. He thought some of his classmates who were less hopeful were so because *"... after five years just to be I would say at the same level ... to be back in school after four or five years. Basically they missed all those years."*

Yet there were inconsistencies in his regard to his own change. While he clearly stated his purpose for coming to Canada was to improve his career, to change the lot for himself and for his future children, he also emphatically insisted that he, himself, had not changed. When asked if the immigration experience had changed the way he looked at the world, he replied. *"No. No. No. No."* This seemed to bear out in his general conversations about his ancestry and his feelings toward his home country. Although he says *"I don't care much that my roots are in Romania. I'm not affected by this"*, all of the photographs he chose were of Romanian people, Romanian traditions, and Romanian celebrations. When I asked him how the pictures connected to his hope his said, *"First of all it's the family. After that it's the land. It's the country itself because when I was there I didn't realize that I miss so much."* He seemed to be tenaciously holding on to his cultural identity, while refusing to admit that it mattered much.

Whenever he talked of his own sense of hopelessness (which he was quick to qualify was *"not quite hopeless")*, it was in reference to his encounters with discrimination. He told stories about being denied a credit card and long distance privileges based on the fact that he was a newcomer to Canada. He argued with the officials but was able to get nowhere and he felt that this experience eroded his hope somewhat. He also described his fellow immigrants' denial of employment opportunities based on their nationality as a trigger for hopelessness. *"I'm considering that they are dis-considering us. It's hopeless!"* and *"You cannot change it."* Joseph's hope was challenged when he lacked power to change his own situation. When he felt in control or in power, he had high hope.

Yang had never thought about this word hope before and she was enthusiastic about the importance and effect of hope in her life, something that she had so far missed in her life. She said, "*before I join this meeting, I never think about this hope" "This word hope is wonderful. It looks simple but you think sometimes… it's very big. Sometimes I think of people without hope they no improvement.*" She even told a story about a clinic that she has been passing on her bus route for almost twenty years. Her awareness newly raised, she noticed that the name of this clinic was the HOPE Clinic and all of a sudden she understood why the clinic was named so.

Yang also explained how she never thought about hope when she was facing difficult times, for example when she lost one of her newborn twin babies and was left to care for the second one, who was premature. "*At that time, maybe I hope but I never think. No I didn't think about this hope, just do it. You have to do. I just hope. I don't think about hope.*" In challenging times, Yang was not critically aware of her own hope.

Likewise, she was uncritical about her sense of happiness during those hard years. I asked her if she felt unhappy at that time and she replied, "*Happy, unhappy. I don't know*". Now, in her retirement, Yang says she is happy, but could not articulate the point at which she began to recognize that she was happy. She did mention several times about being happy, surprised, and hopeful about being able to go to school and use English.

Yang described her English classes and her improved command of the English language as very empowering. In the past, before she became an English student, she would just go to work and come home; she was afraid to go out on her own. Now she is very proud of her independence and said, "*Sure, my children can do it for me but I don't want. I can do it myself. That's very good for myself*". She referred to herself as "*a frog that has gotten out of the well*". This is a reference to a Chinese folktale in which a frog swims around happily in a well, thinking his well is the world. One day the frog looks up and sees that there is something beyond the well and his contentment is replaced with a struggle to escape from the well. For Yang, hope is the act of struggling and she saw English as having helped her get out of the well.

"*Life has changed for me a lot since thinking about this hope.*" Sarim explained that for him there are two kinds of hope. First, a personal hope, over which you have some measure of power; a place where your effort can stimulate change. The second is a more generalized hope, specifically for Sarim - his hope for world peace. He described this hope as a kind of "*nonsense hope*" because an individual has a small role in this hope. But it is still important to sustain this hope in the face of little personal agency. Sarim says, "*Try your best. It will happen, maybe not in my lifetime but it will happen. Keep hope until the last moment*". 'Nonsense hope' is an interesting description of a hope that is not discernable as a sensible, realistic hope; a hope that he does not reflect on in a critical way.

This kind of hope is hard to sustain, though, and Sarim's hope was often challenged. The two areas he talked at length about were his experience with discrimination and his hopeless feelings when he could not see some movement toward resolving a personal problem. "*I gave up. There is no hope. I need to see some movement, some improvement, some reaction. Not even there is no hope; it's going backwards, giving up, giving up.*" In the case of Sarim's generalized hope for world peace, his lack of power of the situation didn't threaten his hope, but in his personal life, where he thinks he should have power, his hope was hugely challenged in the face of his own powerlessness.

Hong began the interview with a strong statement that you have to control your desire (remember that he often interchanged the terms hope and desire). "*This desire is good for life but it has to be put in perspective. It has to be carefully controlled. It has to be within reasonable expectation.*" He made frequent references to taking control of your hope and aligned despair with lacking power to make a change. Conversely, when faced with the research question, "What would I need to know about you to understand your hope?" his immediate reply was that I would need to understand Buddhism, because although he is not Buddhist, he

> *has been influenced by the society in which I live and now that I've come to Canada, it does change but it doesn't change drastically, because the core fundamental of what I believe a person's hope is always been there, starting from day one.*

Hong reiterated the theme expressed in Yang's experience of hope in the face of crisis. When telling the story of his time in the refugee camp, where they were overworked and starved for several years, Hong says,

> *Nobody talked of hope. You were hungry all the time. To be honest, I never thought of hope. You just didn't think about hope. You know what you think? You think about food – everyday. You say to your friend, ah I could eat two chickens today. Or, say if this happened in Canada we would say, Hey, I could eat KFC, a whole Family Bucket today.*

Hong explained that although hunger dominated their thoughts, it was joking about it that buoyed their hope and "*kept them going*". He explained that although they were not attending to hope in a conscious way, the jesting about their plight with one another served to bolster their hope. So like Yang, Hong experienced the power of hope which had an impact in his life, in the absence of any critical awareness of that hope.

Angela used the term 'metamorphisizing' to describe how her thinking has changed over the past decade. She was articulate about the way she used to worry incessantly about the future and in one dramatic moment, found herself rich and secure, but in a dead-end job that she hated, and with premature grey hair. She made a deliberate shift in her way of viewing the world. She says:

> *At some point you can't worry about the future too much. If you worry too much about the future you miss, you lose sight of the wonderful things you have around you right now. The people around you, the opportunities to enjoy the sun, short trips with friends, to get out of town. I just stopped worrying. I used to always like to visualize where I'm going to be in the next five or ten years. I stopped making so many long term plans now. If I can figure out what I can do in the next 6 months, that's actually pretty good. That's as far as my worries go. I just stopped worrying. I feel comfortable doing that.*

Angela's hopes are goal oriented, but her attachment to those goals has changed. When she faced obstacles, her hope was not compromised in the same way as it had been before, because "*I ask different questions to get around those obstacles now.*" She admitted that she is

> *still in the process of developing. Remember, ten years ago my idea of hope was to hope for that new sweater.* [Now] *seeing what hope really is and then how does that related to the meaning of life. Hope, in my way, is understanding your purpose. It doesn't have to be related to personal gain. It's knowing your purpose.*

In understanding her hope better, Angela claimed she has been able to take more risks, and be less fearful of unexpected outcomes. She did, however, make reference to job insecurity as the biggest challenge to her hope.

Another teacher in the group, Janet, described hope and change as irreducibly linked. Both for her and her students, she saw embracing change as both a sign and a result of hope, and conversely, resisting change as tied to hopelessness.

Janet was the only participant to speak directly of 'societal hope'. This hope was described in her photographs of places which are wheelchair accessible. She remarked on the hope it gave her to see societal values shifting over time. Things really are different now than they were in the past, and that inspired hope in Janet.

In terms of the transformative nature of hope, Maria's thoughts and actions regarding hope and change, empowerment, and critical awareness were the most complex. Hope for her, was always connected to growth and improvement in the future, especially in relation to education. She believed hope to be closely connected to hard work. When asked how people would know she was a hopeful person she replied, *"Because they can see I'm hard-working."* She recognized and could articulate the power she felt to improve her future by working hard.

At times, Maria appeared to have a rather simplistic and superficial view of her circumstance. For example, she touted Canada as the perfect saviour, and generalized that all Canadians are wonderful. She was extremely discouraged when she was forced to drop out of junior high school and marry a man seventeen years her senior, but resigned herself to that fact that this was the cultural way: *"You must honor your father's decision"*. She commented that she has changed a lot as a result of all the new things she has seen since coming to Canada. There is some evidence of that. On the other hand, one wonders how deep the changes really go. She told a story at one point about her pregnancies. Her sons she carried for nine months, but said she was pregnant a full twelve months for the girls. She explained the African tradition to "*trust in God's time*" and said if she were in Canada she would want to let the baby come naturally, even if it took twelve months, but that she would never speak up to the doctor. "*The doctor will say I should not dictate for him. And I would be afraid to tell him ... I will just allow him to do his work.*"

In other instances, Maria's insights and actions seemed reflective of a woman with great political savvy and personal efficacy. She talked about the lack of human rights in Africa and the need to educate her people about this. She talked about the experience in Canada and although she was voluble about the positive aspects, she admitted, "*Some they don't talk what they know. When we see Canadians we keep quiet. When they are not there, we talk.*" Although as a young woman Maria was unable to stand up against the arranged marriage she so despised, she went on later to act as President of the refugee camp and worked with various NGO's to bring food and supplies to the people. She also activated the community, organizing the refugees to

> *build many different buildings, like church and a mosque. We make like voluntary work. Group work. I encourage them. I didn't pay them but I give them food for work. I ask United Nations to help them.*

And now in Canada, Maria still gets phone calls from the refugees:

> *You know Chairlady, you know all the suffering we have undergone. You have to go and meet the President of Canada. Tell him of our sufferings. They thought I have the power to do that,* [she laughs] *but I said, you know in Canada they are very good but I can't see the Prime Minister to tell him about the our sufferings in the refugee camp.*

Nonetheless, Maria responded to the pleas of her people and organized fundraisers within her community in Edmonton and used the proceeds to build a school in her village. She not only provided the funds but, over email, provided the leadership for the project. She assigned duties, ordered supplies, and arranged for a person to get there with a video camera. She is now linked with an NGO in Canada, which has agreed to offer financial aid to her village, they said, because of the initiative she has shown.

The research process itself revealed some insights into the transformative and emancipatory nature of hope. A thorough analysis of the factors at play will be presented in the next chapter, but it is important to report here that of the seven persons who participated in this research study, six showed very passionate gratitude for having had the opportunity to participate. In all cases, the expressed reason was that the intentional discussion of hope had changed them in profound and unexpected ways.

Hope and ESL

The second dimension to this research project involved the specific relationship between hope and ESL education. Rich data emerged from this research project as a result of involving both partners of the learning enterprise: teachers and learners. Four themes emerged from the interviews and within the themes there was at times, agreement in the views of the teachers and learners. Sometimes, however the perspectives were quite different. Most elucidating was the discovery that in some instances the hopes of the teachers were not the same as the hopes of the learners. In fact, at times, their hopes conflicted.

Education is hopeful

Most emphatically for the learner group, education was seen as very important in life and with regards to hope. For each of them, the hopes they held for coming to Canada were related to a better education for themselves and / or their children. Even in the case of Sarim, who had to sacrifice his own education to support his family, education was seen as hopeful and very important. Although employment was a prime goal of education, the learner participants felt education itself elevated their hope. Yang studied while employed and continues to study after her retirement saying, "*I am happy now because I can go to school. In Hong Kong impossible to study when you are old.*" Hong spoke of his diminished sense of hope when his family discouraged him from pursuing another career because it wouldn't lead to a higher-paying job. Maria said simply, "*I have hope in my school.*"

The teacher participants did not speak at all about the hopefulness inherent in education, a point that will be explored further in the next chapter.

Language is power

Here, teachers and learners shared a common understanding. Both sides understood the purchase of the English language in this globalized world. The learners talked about their enhanced power as a result of being able to get around in the new language. Yang said, "*Many countries speak English. Many countries have foreigners so English is the first language in the world. Study English is important because this convenience myself.*" Another learner discussed his consternation with his accent, feeling that it set him up for discrimination. One of the teacher participants referred to "*how language becomes a vehicle for hope... I find our language and how we teach it carries a message of hope in a way... you have some control once you get a handle on your communication skills.*"

Teachers should listen

Both groups were unanimous in their opinions about listening and hope. Listening was seen by the learners and teachers alike as the most important quality for an ESL teacher to possess. Both groups valued a learning environment that was predicated on a good relationship between teacher and learner. This relationship included humour and respect, but above all listening. The teachers felt their own sense of hope supported through actively and attentively listening to their learners, in order to identify their needs. Conversely the biggest strain on their hope, in the case of both teacher participants, was when they could not seem to figure out what a learner needed and the learner failed to progress well in the class. Learners recalled stories over and over and over again how their hope was elevated by a teacher just listening. The teachers in their stories did not offer any profound advice or do anything spectacular. They just listened....for a long time. The teachers appreciated programs that allowed the kind of flexibility and autonomy that enabled them to listen and respond to the needs of their students. The learners connected this asset to the personality of the teacher rather than the program.

Marks matter

Related to being responsive to the individual needs of the learners was the teachers' tension with marks. Both teacher participants saw grades as not being reflective of the value of a learner's work. They were more interested in the learning process, improvement, and change that could be observed in the learners. They attested to the subjective and rather arbitrary nature of grading, especially in the context of language learning and cultural integration. Another factor that both teachers discussed was that ESL classes are often non-credentialed courses, so the marks are largely irrelevant in the larger context of education. Angela says,

> *Just relax. How important is this grade I give you rather arbitrarily. We each mark differently. Do you really think the number I give is reflective of the person you are. And I hope they realize that they are more important than whatever number I give them. How I grade them is so different than you would grade them or another teacher. I don't want them to take it so seriously.*

However, when learner participants were asked to relate a time when their hope was challenged in their ESL classes, the stories in every case revolved around marks; either marking they considered unfair, or getting poor marks. In the same vein, good marks and academic promotion figured prominently in the stories of hope in the learning context, second only to being listened to by their teachers. This cautions teachers to be wary of ways in which they may inadvertently diminish the hope of students by issuing low grades. This is not to advocate for meaningless high marks for all learners; it does however challenge ESL educators to reflect on the relevance of traditional mark-based evaluation systems in the context of adult ESL. Personally, this finding will cause me to reassess my own teaching and evaluation methods.

Photographs of Hope

Hope has been described a multi-dimensional life force with elusive and intangible qualities. An attempt to make a tangible representation of the intangible nature of hope requires more than a cognitive analysis. Photographs, art, metaphors, rituals, music, and narratives are avenues of expressions and exploration that embody the multidimensionality of hope. All research is necessarily limited in scope and the scope of this work did not permit the inclusion of music, art or rituals as expressions of hope. It did, however, try to gain access to the affective, creative, metaphoric and intuitive understandings of hope by including participant-generated photographs as a data source.

Presented here is a partial collection of the photographs taken by the participants. Each participant who chose to use photography is represented in this collection (the reader is reminded that two participants declined to take photographs). Some photographs were excluded because they were variations of the same theme and revolved around a single narrative. Some photographs of significance to this study were excluded because they included people from whom written consent was unavailable.

Prior to a discussion of the photographs, I invite the reader to first look at them – take the time to 'see' and 'feel' hope along with the participants (Ziller, 1990).

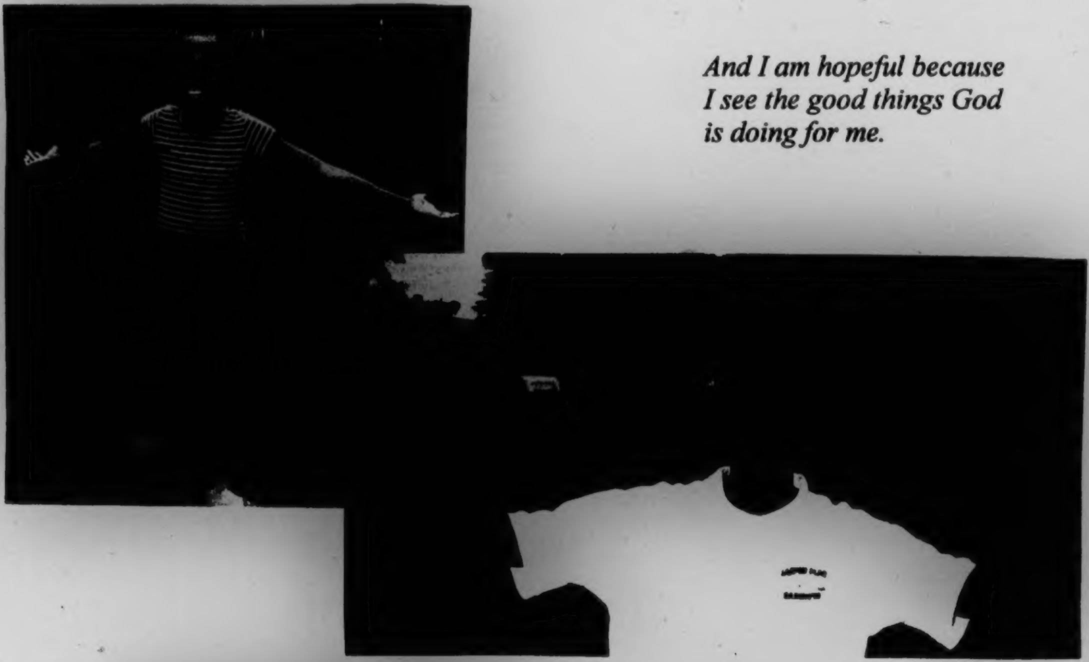
You show your hope in your face...................................***by Maria***

I said, you know I am taking this picture to know hope. So, tell me, I want to know from your face.

My friend says I'm happy and I hope to be happier than this one day because I am in school. I'm trying to do a course and if I finish I will get a good job and do good things in the future.

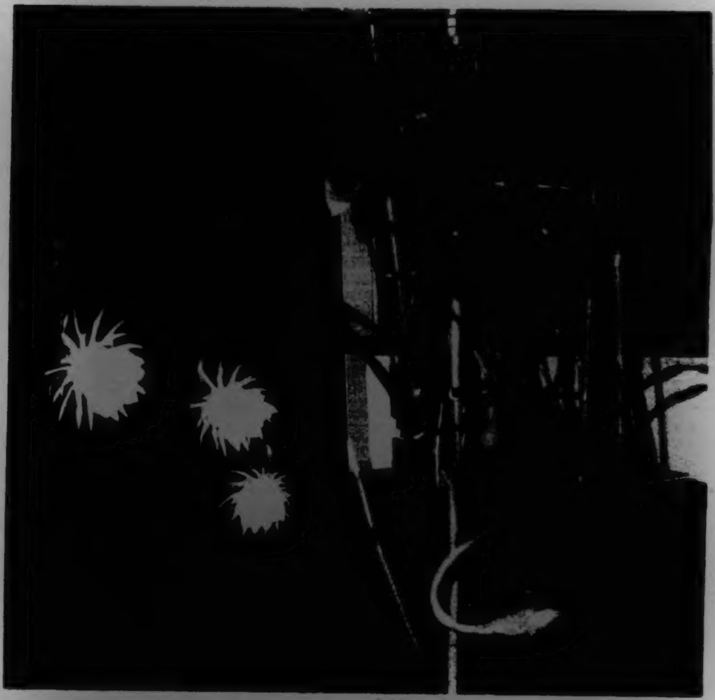
My daughter is happy. She is excited and has hopes for her life.

This is my son. He is very happy. He's telling the friends in the refugee camp when he came to Canada the chickens are so many we don't know which one to eat.



And I am hopeful because I see the good things God is doing for me.

It only blooms in the dark ....*by Yang*



This flower is very beautiful and the smell is very nice – like perfume.

It is night opening. It blossoms only one time a year... only at night...when it is dark.

This flower is almost like a human being. Everything has hope, even animals, everything in nature.

In Chinese culture this flower is bad luck but for me, no. It reminds me of hope.

Surrounded by things that give me hope..........................by Janet

I'm surrounded by things that give me hope: my son, his whole being and presence in my life. I think children are hope personified. And then there is my home: to see a run-of-the-mill bungalow become a home, to fix it, maintain it, to increase its value.

I'm really getting into this idea of gardening, even philosophically – planting the seed and tending to it, maintaining it and giving it effort.

Food and a place to live gives me hope ....by Maria

She was not like this before she was in the refugee camp. She used to sleep on the ground in the refugee camp. Now she has a nice place, so she has hopes.

We were hungry – very, very hungry. Now my daughter has lots of food to eat.

And even the refugees back home have hope because they see some of us change our lives, they might change one day.

Societal Hope ....by Janet

Increased access has given me great hope in the way we view the value and contribution of physically challenged people. I know there is Braille and such out there but I don't have anyone blind in my life so that doesn't really stand out for me. But my mother was in a wheelchair so anything wheelchair oriented stands out for me. It was funny how just thinking about hope opened up, you know, not just personal things anymore but bigger things. I love it that as a society we are moving in some good directions. It gives me societal hope.

Skyscrapers and blue sky ....by Joseph

When I look at those towers I know that someday I will be there. When I look at a big skyscraper downtown in the morning, every morning the sky is very blue and the air is very clear. That's why I like blue so much. I feel I have maximum energy in the morning even when I was working in Romania. I started at eight o'clock and on my way to the office I felt the sunny day and the blue sky.

Hope in our children ....*by Maria*

You see the way she holds her children. She hopes they will help her in the future. She is excited and has hopes for her life. Do you see the mother? She is happy. What I cannot provide my children can provide in the future maybe. That alone gives me hope.

Hope in the unexpected ....*by Angela*

This picture moved me very much. When I visited there my friends told me it was perfectly safe – the volcano had been dormant for years. This picture reminds me that surprises may happen but they may not necessarily be bad thing. They may not be as bad as you imagined so you shouldn't be scared to meet the challenge. Take the risk; you can overcome it. I like that you can see the church in the picture, too.

The first thing one might notice about the photographs is the wide variety of subject matter: family, food, volcano, skyscraper, flowers. This attests to the very unique and personal associations with hope that individuals have. Hope resists formulas and reasoned responses. It is made visible through these diverse images, which are imbedded in the context from which they came.

The photographs and their narratives demonstrate the way in which the words can imbue the image with meaning otherwise inaccessible, and how the photographs form a context in which to explore hope. The photograph entitled *It only comes out in the dark* speaks to theme of hope that lives in spite of great hardship and despair. When Yang first showed me the picture she said she did not really understand why she chose the picture, but that it was the first thing that popped into her mind. Initially, she said only "*I like it. It's beautiful".* As I asked her to tell me more about the flower, about how it blooms only at night, she started to make connections to hope that she had not been able to articulate before. Her growing animation as she was able to better explain her understanding of hope indicated that this was significant in her understanding and important that she be able to communicate. At one point I recapped a part of her explanations and she exclaimed, "*You get my meaning! I'm so happy*!"

The words that accompany the photographs are an important part of this research. Photographs alone can inspire hope in others and have been used as such. But the purpose here is not only to 'see' and 'feel' the hope that speaks through the photographs but to understand the essence of that hope from the vantage point of the photographer. The photograph of the mother holding her children may trigger a sense of hopefulness in me that may have little or nothing to do with Maria's interpretations of hope. The narratives form an important context from which to view the photographs.

There is a striking omission in this collection. There are no photographs of books and desks, schools and classrooms, teachers and learners. One participant, a teacher, did include several photographs of her classroom and students but they unfortunately could not be included here for logistical reasons: it was impossible to get written consent from all the faces in the photograph. That being said, there was still a puzzling dearth of photographs that relate to education. I had not instructed them to take photographs related to education because I did not want to collect artificial representations that did not reflect the essence of how the participants experienced hope. I had, however, expressly told them that pictures of their schools, ESL classes, or classmates were one possibility. When asked in the final focus group meeting what they made of this, the participants agreed that they felt too embarrassed to take pictures like this at school.

A similar finding was reported in Parkin's (1997) study of hope in a Tanzanian school environment. In that study, adolescents were specifically instructed to take photographs of hope in their schools, but some reported that their photographs were not really the ones they wanted. They did not feel they had the power to access the places and situations where they could take photographs that would have better described their hope. Based on my past experience with ESL learners and the associations many of them make to the word 'embarrassing' in conjunction with the explanations I heard from this group, I suspect the 'embarrassment' of the participants in this study was in part due to their lack of agency, but there was no conclusive resolution to this question.

Another possible explanation, perhaps, for the lack of visibility of educative photographs in this research of hope is the lack of visibility of hope in the practice of education. The majority of participants spoke at length about the hope inherent in education. Further investigation is needed to determine why the abstract connection between hope and education was not conveyed in concrete images from formal education contexts.

Summary

As an educator committed to emancipatory practices, I bring a unique gaze upon the subject of hope. I have tried to make sense of participants' meanings of hope without over- generalizing. I sought common threads between the descriptions that may increase an understanding of hope as a conceptual model, while trying to honor the unique and dynamic nature of these individual experiences of hope. I concur with Nekolaichuk et. al., (1999) that "frameworks that mask personal experience seem to widen the gap between theory and clinical practice" (p. 592). The value of this qualitative research, then, is enhanced by comparing and contrasting to other perspectives, by allowing space in the discussion for the unique expressions and in the implications of both the general and the specific for improving practice. In the next chapter, I will examine how the impressions of these individuals concur with what others have said about hope, and what new questions they might bring to the foreground. Also, the nature of this study implores consideration of the research act itself, and how these findings can inform the education and research practices of those who dare to hope.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOPE AND TRANSFORMATION

This project was a study about hope, through hope. The participants told their stories about hope, and it was my intention to hear and probe their stories with a hopeful presence. I chose to view our encounters through the lens of hope as expressed by these seven participants. As a result, the happenings within the research process itself shed as much light on the way hope works as the actual responses of the participants. In this chapter, I will first consider the findings in terms of the hope literature, examining where there may be universal elements of hope and where there are diversities in the unique experiences of hope. Then, I will discuss some questions that the words, stories, and photographs invoke about transformative learning theory. I will then examine the layer of information that was imbedded within the research encounter itself and explore what that process tells us about hope. This chapter ends with recommendations for practice and ideas for continued research in the area of hope.

Hope Theory

How do these findings further our understandings of hope? Again, it must be remembered that this study is situated in a very multicultural setting, and the direct study of hope is largely a North American interest (Holt, 2000). Perhaps it is in the relatively privileged and comfortable location of the West that creates the space to ponder hope. As one participant so tersely reminded us, "*You don't think about hope when you are hungry.*" When compared against existing literature from the West, the findings of this study can further our understanding of the meanings of hope and can foster greater cross-cultural understanding of hope. The nursing profession, with its interest in culture care, has long held an interest in cultural understandings of hope (Holt, 2000). Teachers and learners in Canada, and even more acutely in the case of ESL, could benefit from the intentional use of hope in all its cultural expression. I will point out and discuss the diversities and universals that emerge when the data from these seven participants and their cultural contexts is compared with existing hope literature as a way of furthering the discussion and insight into the phenomenon of hope.

Universals

Many of the essential meanings of hope expressed in these findings echo the attributes of hope described in the literature. Although there is no consensus in definition of hope, nor does there need to be (Jevne, 1991), some attributes occur with significant frequency. This suggests that there may be universals in the concept of hope that are experienced in similar ways across cultures, genders, languages, and worldviews.

Hope as a life force is one characteristic that reiterates throughout the literature. The Dufault and Martocchio (1985) definition of hope refers directly to hope as a life force. Others (Farran et al., 1994; Hafen, et al, 1996; McGee, 1984; Nekolaichuk et al., 1999) describe hope as a motivating force or necessary condition for action. The results of this study lend credence to this understanding of hope. The idea that hope was a necessary life energy and that without hope there could be no life was a theme that emerged to greater or lesser degrees in the responses of all the participants.

A goal or desired outcome is an essential element of hope that has been addressed from several different perspectives in the literature (Edey & Jevne, 2003; Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1994; Snyder, 1995; Stotland, 1969). These results strengthen the position held by many that goals are not rigid or static. They can change over time, or shift within the hoping experience as a person gradually relinquishes hopes that become unrealistic or unattainable and replaces them with a focus on new hopes.

Dufault and Martocchio (1985) describe two kinds of hope, particularized hope and generalized hope. Generalized hope describes hope that has no specific object, a general feeling of hopefulness that keeps one going. Particularized hope on the other hand, is focused on a hope-object. A person's orientation between the two kinds of hopes vacillates as particularized hopes are identified and threatened. Dufault & Martocchio (1985) suggest that "generalized particularized hope clarifies, prioritizes, and affirms what a hoping person perceives as important in life, [whereas] generalized hope provides the climate for developing particular hopes and later rescues the hoping person when the particular hope no longer seems realistic" (p. 381). This way of conceptualizing hope is well-supported by the data presented herein. Clearly in the stories of refugee camps and escapes there was an umbrella of hope that propelled some through the perilous times of uncertainty when particular goals were untenable. The voices in these narratives affirmed that at times there is nothing left to do but hope and "hope is quite enough" (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985,

p. 381). The notion of societal hope, and a hope for world peace, although they have objects, seem to lean more toward a generalized hope that buoys the spirit when particularized hope is threatened.

The relational nature of hope is also well documented in the literature (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Edey, 2000; Edey et al., 1998; Farran et al., 1995; Nekolaichuk, et al. 1999). This aspect of hope was also documented in this research. Hope was both enhanced and diminished within relationships. The participants here, though, offered texture to the meaning of relationship that is not forthcoming in the literature. There was much focus on the sharing of humour as a powerful force that connected people to one another and to their hope. Only Edey (2000; 2003) and Jevne (1993) discuss humour to any great length. These findings support their acknowledgement of the importance of humour in the landscape of hope.

Listening to the stories and sharing moments of laughter prompted me consider possible connections between humour and the transcendent nature of hope. The spiritual or transcendent nature of hope is prominent in the literature on hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Nekolaichuk, et al., 1999) and this resonated in the stories of these participants. However, the idea that humour may be one avenue by which to engage the transcendent is not broached in the literature. In the Dufault and Martocchio (1985) model humour would seem to place neatly in the affective domain, whereas humour in relation to transcendence would fall under what they call the affiliative domain. Nekolaichuk et al., (1999) refer to the state of happiness under the factor of authentic caring in the interpersonal dimension of hope, but the profundity of humour in these stories seem to fit better across the entire scope of attributes of personal spirit, such as vibrancy, meaning, value, engaging, caring. Further research is obviously needed to investigate the possible relationship between humour and the transcendent. Nonetheless, hope literature and this data support the importance of humour in hope. If humour can engage, motivate, energize, and sustain hope, could it possibly offer similar support to transformative learning?

Diversities

In the scholarly discussion around the spiritual or transcendent attribute of hope (Dufault & Martocchio, 1985; Farran et al., 1995; Hafen et al., 1996), the religious attachment to God is not a necessary attribute. Hope may, but does not have to, include a place for God. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) for example, mention God under the affiliative domain, and consider hope in terms of one's relationship to a higher life force as one option of affiliation. Other options include a relationship to nature, animals, or people. Holt (2000) studied hope from a cultural perspective in the very specific setting of the Dominican Republic. She found several attributes of hope that were unique to this culture, but underrepresented in the literature. One of these attributes was that faith in God was an essential source of hope. Given the dominant Catholic context of the Dominican Republic, this is not particularly surprising. Amongst the multi-cultured voices represented in this study, three named God as an essential source of hope. Maria, a Christian made frequent references of her hope having been given and sustained by God; Hong remarked that to understand his hope I would first need to understand Buddhism; Sarim, a B'hai, was exiled because he would not denounce his faith and used his faith in God as source of hope to get him through his ordeal. One of the Canadian teachers made a rather oblique comment regarding this question. When I asked her what accounted for her hope, she was very pensive, and finally said "*that's a very good question. I don't know... because I'm not particularly religious.*" The findings suggest that existing models of hope may be culturally conscripted in their positioning of God in the experience of hope. In some other cultural contexts, faith in God is a central source of hope. Faith as described from a Western perspective is equal with other hope sources.

Another subtle shift from the literature occurs around the notion of hard work. In Chapter Three, I discussed the prevalence of the theme that hard work sustained hope. I described this under the heading *The Realistic Nature of Hope* and linked it to the literature that speaks of an energizing force. This finding rests comfortably in this framework. However, I think the repeated phrase '*hard work*' found in this research and in other cross-cultural studies (Holt, 2000), may possibly be speaking to a unique quality, connected to, but not exactly like, an energizing force. Dufault and Martocchio (1985) describe the 'being' and 'doing' elements of hope. Others, too, highlight the importance of work in hope (Hafen, 1996; Nekolaichuk and Bruera, 1998; Snyder, 1995), but the descriptions do not necessarily reflect the heavy toil suggested in this data. This subtle difference raises some questions: Could it be that hard work actually reflects the intimate connection between hope and suffering? Or, is hard work suggestive of the physicality of the hoping experience; or perhaps a visible mirror of the toils of the heart. The answers cannot be found within in the scope of this research but are important avenues of inquiry for future cross-cultural analysis.

One participant made a most evocative statement about hope. Janet's pictures of hope were about what she called "*societal hope*". The photographs depicted wheelchair accessibility and her comments were that she felt a sense of hope when she could see that society was improving, becoming more inclusive. Inexplicably, I immediately remembered one of Maria's stories:

> *You know to be a refugee is not easy... When they said today they send used dresses for us, they will make the line from 5 in the morning. [The UN] will tell me to make the announcement so nobody will go to work to wait for these used dresses. Some people will leave their homes 5 in the morning to go and stand in the line. They will tell the children to go. The line will maybe when the dress come at 10 in the morning, some they cannot even get one dress. They cry. They will go to me Chairlady we don't have clothes even pants I don't get...*
>
> *You know this year, sometimes I see things in the garbage I think I say ...oh my people in the refugee camp... [In Canada] I take old chairs in the garbage I put in my basement. My basement was full with things... I said I'm sending to the refugees. But I don't have the strength to do that ... sometimes I just cry, I cry bitterly. I will go down the basement and see those things and cry, I said Oh my God, my people want to have these things but oh my God they can't.*

These are examples of hope and despair that are not personal. It might be argued that they are relational but I believe it goes further than that. The hope represented by these two women is a hope that goes beyond a personal, affiliative nature to hope of a more global nature, a hope more like the generalized hope as described by Dufault and Martocchio (1994). An argument made by Hill (1998) suggests a postmodern turn in the consciousness of humanity. She concurs with a growing number of authors across divergent fields - ecology, sociology, psychology, education, and philosophy - in their convergent opinion that there is a need for, and evidence of, a drastic change in human consciousness- a change toward "a consciousness that is more capable of accepting diversity and difference, capable of handling ambiguity, and cognizant of our interdependence and connections with humankind and the earth" (Hill, 1998, p. 56). It would be interesting to explore whether this interconnectedness to humankind is a newly uncovered attribute of hope, or a metamorphosis of the construct itself that signals a shift in the firmament of the world's consciousness.

Hope as Transformation

In conceptualizing this research, my focus was on hope and education. Since 1978, education discourse has revolved around transformative learning theory, anchored upon Mezirow's initial work on perspective transformation, and evolving and revolving to include transformation that intersects with psychological type (Cranton, 2000), depth psychology (Scott, 1997), soul (Dirkx, 1997), and social action (Daloz, 2000; Freire, 2000), Through the portal of hope, the dialogue with seven ESL learners from diverse backgrounds and cultures has triggered in me a disorienting dilemma, as it were, as I muse over some of the culturally-bound assumptions that underpin transformative learning theory.

Knowledge is power. When we become more critically aware of our own positionality and more cognizant of the hegemonic forces that carve out our existence we have more power to assert ourselves in the world. The assumption is that transformative learning happens once we become critically aware and that critical knowledge gives us power (Mezirow, 2000). In the case of these seven participants, we also witness a different type of power – a power that does not emanate from the critical, the conscious, or the rational. The power that propelled transformation in some of these stories was the more innate power of raw hope - hope that was anchored in the transcendent, and hope rooted in black-and-white necessity.

Transformative theory has its own historical development over time which has made it more compatible with hope theory. A brief review of several transformative learning philosophies will help situate this discussion.

Mezirow concentrates on the cognitive aspects of transformation with particular attention to critical reflection and discussion. He has, however, shifted his stance somewhat from his initial conceptualization of transformative learning and acknowledges the importance of the affective and social context of the learning process (Mezirow, 2000). In his latest work he posits that learning occurs "in the real world in complex institutional, interpersonal, and historical settings [and] must be understood in the context of cultural orientations embodied in our frames of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). He also considers asymmetrical power relationships and social interaction as important variables to be addressed in the learning experience.

One lens through which to understand transformative learning draws from Freire's (2000) ideas on emancipatory education. Freire saw all education as either serving the agenda of liberation or oppression. His goal was to empower learners through dialogue, to critique their place in the world and thus empowered, to act to transform their world. This process he named *conscientização.*

Yet another interpretation of transformative learning is the constructivist - developmental approach (Daloz; 2000; Kegan, 2000). From this perspective transformational learning is intuitive, holistic, and contextual. Daloz favours a narrative approach, which he feels humanizes the transformative learning process and articulates the developmental transitions that learners experience. These transitions ultimately transform the learners in the process (Baumgartner, 2001).

Finally, transformative learning has been considered from a spiritual perspective, an approach situated in a Jungian perspective (Boyd and Meyers, 1988; Boyd, 1991; Dirkx, 1997; Scott, 1997). Dirkx (1997) and Healy (2000) speak of learning through the soul – a process that goes beyond an ego-based, rational approach that relies on words for communication to an "extra-rational soul-based learning that emphasizes feelings and images" (Baumgartner, 2001, p.18).

In all these unique interpretations and expressions, transformative learning theory is firmly anchored in the "culturally specific conditions associated with the development of adult education as a vocation in Western Europe and North America, a liberal tradition that depends ultimately on faith in informed, free human choice and social justice" (Mezirow, 2000, p. xiv). What exciting possibilities lie in the communion of adult ESL education and transformative learning theory to integrate new knowledge toward the enhancement of both! Hope theory may be a way to translate these worldviews to each other. This cross-cultural research study provides a forum for discussion to explore the extent to which the assumptions of transformative learning theory are culture-bound.

To tackle this challenge, I will frame the discussion around the following four questions: 1) How does hope sustain the critical reflection? 2) Is hope a habit of mind? 3) How is the element of choice in transformation different in other cultural contexts? 4) Can what has been labeled the 'language barrier' be in itself a conduit for enlightenment?

How does hope sustain critical reflection?

Hope can support transformative learning by lending courage in the face of uncertainty. One of the participants explained how hope gave her the courage to descend into despair and not be afraid of being swallowed up by it. This description of hope can be likened to Scott's (1997) view of transformation from a depth perspective. She refers to the fundamentally extrarational process and describes it as "a 'sitting' (listening or waiting) with the images [that] requires us to descend to a kind of darkness" (p.46). Hope is intimately linked with hopelessness and therefore is not intimidated by hopelessness or darkness. As we saw with the participants having marital problems, when the work of critical reflection became overwhelming or demoralizing, it was the 'ever-present pilot light' of hope that kept spurring them on through the blackest of times. What was also clear in these stories was the ability of hope to not only sustain the energy needed to endure the toil of critical reflection, but to actually enhance cognitive capability, as evidenced by the creative solutions that participants attributed to hope. Then, hope was also a factor in enabling participants to carry out action resulting from their reflection. Hope can be an important ally in the journey of critical reflection.

Is hope a habit of mind?

Hope can be imagined as an example of a transcendent habit of mind. It offers a possible explanation for transformation that occurs without explicit critical reflection. Cranton (2000) discusses the case of Peter, who claims transformation in the absence of critical reflection. She yields to the assumption that critical processes probably occurred but with such finesse for this intuitive learner that he may not have been quite aware of his own critical thought - an interesting and possible hypothesis. An alternate interpretation may be that for Peter, like for Maria in this study, the dynamic of hope replaced the dynamic of critical cognition and propelled action that was transformational.

One might assume from the data herein that Maria, the learner participant from Africa, had not experienced transformation. She cannot articulate her rational processes very well and her discourse in fraught with contradiction. This contradiction, in Jungian terms would signify lack of individuation. When she tells the story of her twelve month pregnancies, we see a woman who has not challenged the assumptions of her upbringing (she believes it is God's time is best for a baby) and who does not have the personal efficacy to assert her beliefs (she would be scared to tell the Canadian doctor her belief). In addition, she maintains her entrenched beliefs about the supremacy of men and professionals (even if it is not okay, I would let him do his work). The contradiction lies in her actions.

Maria acts like a woman empowered. She was president of a refugee camp for four years. She impacted decisions of the United Nations. Although she espouses the beliefs about woman's subservience to man which are entrenched in her cultural context, in the refugee camp she organized the women to hide the men in the bush when rebels came aiming to kill all males over the age of twelve. She acted as their protector, not their servant. Although she espouses her meek attitude toward those in power, she was able to mobilize the United Nations to reunite her with her son, who had been located in Africa after having been missing for five years. It took her more than a year of letters, calls, and relentless pressure, but her son is now with her in Edmonton. She has also mobilized her entire village by way of email and phone calls and has orchestrated and financed the building of a new school in the village. These actions, committed by a young woman who was forced against her will to drop out of high school into an arranged marriage, imply significant change and significant emancipation. In talking with her, one notices a dearth of criticality and an abundance of hope.

The photographs Maria shared for this research reiterated over and over again that she felt high hope because she was alive and had food, shelter and clothing. She was surprised to be alive and now she looked at life in a different way. But her pictures do not reveal any deep understanding of the political and economic entanglements that set her country into such trauma. The good fortune she has found in Canada she equates with benevolent Canadians who saved her from despair. She thinks Americans and Canadians should go over and teach her country about human rights and she casts herself always in the shadow of her Western, white saviors. Transformative learning theory charges that people like Maria need to become critically aware of the forces of oppression, understand the relationships of power before they can act on their own behalf toward emancipation. However, it could be argued that Maria has already acted in profound ways on her own behalf and on the behalf of her people, taking power without critically knowing how or why she was able to do so. She was spurred on by something more akin to the existential hope that she and others have described: a hope that moves because there is nothing else to do.

How is the element of choice in transformation different in other cultural contexts?

The above questions rest on the assumption of choice. Sharp (1995) says we cannot develop as individuals unless we can "choose our own way and with moral deliberation" (in Cranton, 2000 p.189). Mezirow (2000) places transformative learning squarely in the context of informed, free choice of democratic society. What are we to make then of cultures and situations where free choice is severely limited? This assumption would seem to imply that those socialized in communities and cultures that subdue free will through oppressive structure, more family-oriented cultures, or the values of honor can never transform their learning and themselves in significant ways. I am reminded of a learner who told our class that dexterity with chopsticks was a sure sign of intelligence. An astute Bosnian woman spoke up and asked "Does that mean all Europeans are stupid?" What may seem plausible in one context can lead to erroneous and misleading assumptions in another.

Another important insight hope research can offer here is the idea that hope becomes most visible in times when choice is restricted. Already discussed in this work are stories of people such as Victor Frankl, and Nelson Mandela who illustrate ways in which both hope and transformation transpire in situations where personal choice and control is grossly restricted. In the West, there is a "very powerful equation that says to lose control is to lose everything" (Goleman, in Hafen et al., p. 446). But it often happens that in times of confinement and helplessness the greatest hope and transformative action ensues. Hope theory supports Mandela when he says, "everything can be taken from a person but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to determine one's attitude in any given set of circumstances – to choose one's own way".

Can what is been labeled the 'language barrier' be in itself a conduit for enlightenment?

As an ESL educator, language is my passion and my purview. Language plays a pivotal role in transformative learning. It would hard to imagine critical reflection and dialogue without language. The spiritual side of transformation is grounded in depth psychology (Dirkx, 1997; Scott, 1997) and speaks to the role of language. Depth psychology is a belief based on the assumption that the unconscious plays a significant part in shaping our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Understanding how this occurs comes though a process of differentiation. Differentiation is a personal, meditative act whereby a person descends deeply into the soul, quieting the ego, and accessing the unconscious and the collective unconscious in order to discern what is essential to know and what is important to negate (Scott, 1997). It is an act that seeks internal images that are undifferentiated or veiled, to bring them in consciousness, so that "what happens unconsciously relates to or is aligned with what happens consciously" (Scott, 1997, p.47). By sorting through this conscious and unconscious information, a person can move toward transformation. Scott (1997) states that this type of transformation is an 'alone' process that "requires deep prelinguistic sitting, a type of reflection that is not necessarily related to language" (p.46). I am reminded of the intuitive, affective communication that is honed in a setting with linguistic simplicity. If this type of transformation is not related to language, it is possible that language itself may interfere with or impede some types of transformative learning? This may imply that for the participants in this study, their challenged capacity to rely on language actually enabled transformation to occur more readily, albeit in ways less critical.

The Research Experience

The final question asked of each participant was 'What was it like to participate in this research?' Given my commitment to having hope present in the interviews, this project could be described as intervention research. It was important for me to know how the research itself intervened in the hope of the participants. Intentionally broad and open-ended, this question allowed me insight into their experience of hope in this context without being too directive. Naturally, I expected the polite and appropriate responses that were forthcoming; "*I enjoyed it.*" "*And I like it.*" "*It was a pleasant experience.*" If one has established good rapport in the interview process, participants on both sides are reluctant to offend. Positive comments, while perhaps not always accurate reflections of the experience, nonetheless speak to the truth of the participants' understanding of good manners and their sense of caring toward the researcher. But to really understand the impact of these hope dialogues, I was interested in more than just the words that answered that question.

Two aspects of the responses attest to the significant impact of these hope conversations on the lives of the participants; first, the spontaneous nature of each participant's very individual explanation of why it was good; and secondly, the vivacity of their responses. These two aspects verify the emancipatory outcome of this study.

What are the characteristics of hope that would allow it to be called emancipatory? Returning to our definition, we are reminded that emancipatory education includes the shifts in perspective described in transformative learning theory and the disturbing of relationships between oppressor and oppressed through a process of empowerment. Empowerment starts at the individual level but only empowerment that translates into action qualifies as emancipation (Freire, 1997; 2000). So, if hope were the catalyst for learning that resulted in personal empowerment, a shift in perspective, and an ensuing action, it could be named emancipatory.

Personal empowerment was cited as one result of the research by five participants, including three learner participants and two teacher participants. These five followed their polite niceties with unsolicited and heartfelt thanks: "*Really Judy, I have to thank you for this. It has changed so much for me.*" For them, the act of focusing attention on hope itself gave them a sense of power in their lives that they had not known they were lacking. They became aware of their entrapments in the process of conversing about hope and with hope present throughout the discourse they were filled with a sense of power rather than fear as they articulated their obstacles.

As an example, Janet and Sarim felt trapped in marriages that were without hope. The awakening of their own knowledge about hope, without any direction from me, transferred to a source of enlightenment and support that gave them both the capacity and the belief in that capacity to make active changes in their lives. Sarim had felt hopeless about his marriage. He told me about the hopes he had for his marriage that could not be realized because he could not change his wife's attitude. When asked what was stopping him from acting on behalf of his own hope, he was able to discern and articulate the cultural forces that were inhibiting his choices. As he explained the collision of his two cultures, he grew visibly happier, lighter, and his talk was more hopeful. One reasonable explanation is that the hope that was ignited in the course of this dialogue and within our relationship prompted and enabled increased critical awareness and capacity for change. Sarim learned something about himself and the forces inhibiting him and that learning was emancipatory.

Janet, too, entered the research endeavour in the middle of marital crisis. She said very emphatically that she credits these hope dialogues with empowering her to enter counseling and to be productive and strong and true in the process. In her words, *"These two things are serendipitous and I don't think co-incidental."* She also was able to reflect on the social forces that were serving to oppress her control, and dampen her hope. As an example she compared her two journals. The counselor had suggested that she keep a journal as she went through marriage counseling, as a way of getting thoughts out, venting. Accepting the assumption that to vent her anger at her husband on paper would be therapeutic, Janet wrote pages and pages of what she later called 'poison'. She explained how the focus on him and on her rage festered, fostering increased rage and diminishing her ability to act. She could not get past the rage enough to even imagine a way to escape her situation, much less have the will and the ways to enact change.

At the same time, Janet had been asked by me to keep a hope journal as part of this research exercise. She did so, and remarked being surprised to notice the profound affect her hope journal had. She was not intentionally writing about her marital situation, yet in the process of focusing on hope, she found herself newly aware of choices and possibilities that were open to her within her marriage, and newly refreshed with the energy to put those changes into motion. Unlike the venting journal, the hope journal reminded her of other times when she had hope, and used hope, and she said:

> *I'm not sure I would have been so open to the counseling had I not participated in these hope conversations. And it has given me power. And power is hopeful. The power to reassess. I am certainly feeling more hopeful and powerful in my marriage. I really think hope let that open up. Definitely.*

She also reported being much more confident about her ability to change without compromising what was important to her as a woman, a wife, and as a mother. Janet has already begun to live out her transformation by setting into motion her plans to move to another province. She is taking charge of her life in ways she never before imagined. She concluded by saying that "*hope is very powerful*."

In addition to Janet and Sarim, all the other participants, save one, were noticeably enlivened as they articulated their answers to that final question. Joseph was most impacted by the meeting of the other participants. Three others spoke of how they had never before thought about hope, and how they could see the difference it had made in their day-to-day experiences. One of them was prompted to put pen to paper, something he had not done for years. He said:

> *I think when I go back home I'm going to start writing. Judy, Thank-you, thank-you for this opportunity. I never sat down to think about this, but I'm going to and I'm going to write it so I could use it one day. You know in Cambodia people, many people have nothing. Some of them believe they have nothing but I want to tell them they have hope. So I have to write this down so I could apply it to every situation. It's really good. Because when you bring hope to others you fulfill your own hope.*

One woman, however, offered a disconfirming response that warrants some discussion.

Maria was exuberant and full of stories during our first interview. She talked freely and readily for over two hours. We left one another laughing and talking and she said she would be happy to do a second interview. We made an appointment for late the following week.

The second interview was vastly different in tone than the first. At the outset I noticed Maria seemed tired so I asked if she wanted to reschedule. She declined and we began. I started to ask some questions of her photographs and immediately she seemed exasperated. She talked, without her usual animation, about hope in the abstract - academic words bereft of the stories that were so abundant in the first interview. Later, the stories resumed, and they were very sad and personal accounts of despair. I tried to be sensitive to her emotion, listening attentively without pressuring her to continue talking about that which she would rather forget. But with every comment I made to create an opening for her to change the subject if she desired, she reverted back to the next horror story. Her body language changed, too; she began to cower. My dis-ease was also growing and I did my best to alleviate our distress, to little avail. Maria's answer to that last interview question (What was it like for you to participate in this research?) reflected the contradictions that had dominated this interview:

> *I just enjoy it because you make me remember things I want to forget and you make me remember the important of hopes, hope. Anyway it is okay, I enjoyed it. It's great.*

I wondered why and how remembering horrors that she would rather forget could be enjoyable, great, or even okay; especially when her general demeanor was indicating that it was not okay at all.

Perhaps my attempt to be overt and academic about something as sacred as hope was, for this woman, an ineffective approach. For this woman, whether for reasons of culture, race, ethnicity, religion, spiritual paradigm, or perhaps a soul branded by torture, analyzing hope in this critical way may have been insulting, patronizing, and demeaning, in addition to being ineffective. I noticed whenever I asked her to tell me about her photographs she got a quizzical look on her face that was full of discomfort. She was not bubbling to talk about her pictures as the others were, but instead would say "*Just look and you will see.*" She seemed perplexed, perhaps offended, that their relevance required explanation.

Ethically, I wondered if I had transgressed. Analytically, I wondered where the power was and who was controlling the interview. Spiritually, I wondered where my hope was going. Reflexion of my own position in this interview further illuminates the workings of hope in relationship.

As detailed in Chapter Three, when research focuses on the primacy of experience, respect for the beliefs and values of others, an emphasis on relationship and process factors, and a search for authenticity, the relationship between researcher and participant "renders the respondent vulnerable and the researcher responsible" (Hart, 1999). The rules of engagement here were blurred, given the very personal nature of both the topic and the methodology. With my tape recorder and my note pad, I could not escape the trappings of being perceived as a researcher, garbed in objectivity, seeking answers to questions for my own purposes. However, within the research relationship, I was one woman speaking to another with a level of trust and understanding that opened the path for sharing deeply personal ideas, memories, and impressions. As the contradiction emerged in the interview, I became more aware of, and uncomfortable with the tape recorder.

Weeks later, in an interview with a different participant, I encountered a similar situation, as one man became very emotional as he poured out his despair. This time I turned off the tape recorder. This was not to be fodder for my research purposes because this seemed not to be the content he had agreed to share with me when he signed on to talk about hope. This emotional outpouring actually contained little in the way of information about this individual's understanding of hope, or hopelessness for that matter. But the discourse itself gives testimony to the authentic relationships that sometimes develop in research venues and supports the assertion made by all participants that listening is a powerful way to elevate hope. Once I turned off the tape recorder I felt immediately more centered in my ability to be one person listening to another, and less like a voyeur of anguish. The result of this decision was a much more empowering and respectful encounter.

In contrast to Maria's answer to "What was it like?" this man disclosed that although he initially had reservations about participating because he was feeling so low and without hope, he was so glad and grateful that he had participated.

> *To tell the truth, after the first interview, I was always waiting for your next call. This talking and getting relieved is very helpful. I was always thinking, hopefully she will call, hopefully she will call. There are lots of things in my heart and in my mind I wanted to tell someone. It was really joyful for me. I have to thank you.*

Later, he revealed that between the first interview and the second he was "*always waiting for your call.*" His hope was elevated and he was managing his trials and loneliness better because of the hope conversations. At the end of the second interview we had agreed to get together with our mutual friend, the teacher who had recruited him to the project, after the project was complete to celebrate together.

These two encounters with intimacy in a research relationship elucidate our understanding of the delicate and powerful implications of hopeful work in relation to others.

Considerations for Practice

Consider the intentional use of hope in education.

Hope is relevant to both teachers and learners. Hope can serve as an ally for teachers as they traverse the challenges of the classroom and come into relation with the oftentimes tumultuous lives of adult ESL learners. In a counseling setting, both client and therapist must possess hope in order for the therapeutic process to be successful (Edey et al., 1998; Snyder, 1995). Teaching is not counseling, and the distinction needs to remain clear, but there are parallels to be gleaned here that are relevant to any profession, be it nursing, counseling, teaching, or conducting research, that requires them to be considered together. Furthermore, we recall Snyder's (1995) position that hope is a better indicator of success than intelligence, and so educators should consider attending to hope in their work.

Joan Fouts is a local school principal who is intentionally using hope in her school. In response to the dire needs of many of the students in this inner city school, Fouts organized a hope program. Initially an after-school program, this initiative engages children to explore hope in groups and invites them to make hope more visible in their lives and in their school. The hope work is grounded in a very realistic approach that is not daunted by the extreme challenges faced by this school and the results of this hope-focused approach to education have been remarkable. Student achievement, school morale, communication, and cooperation have all been positively impacted by the intentional use of hope (Fouts, 2004). As teachers began to notice the dramatic impact the hope program was having on their students, they approached Fouts requesting a similar program be implemented for staff. The hope program for staff was implemented and the results are no less impressive.

Consider assumptions that inhibit hope.

Perspective transformation involves becoming critically aware of tacit assumptions that constrain our ability to understand and act upon the world. Mezirow (2000) and others have shown how these inhibiting belief systems are acquired from the social contexts in which we grow and mature. As educators we have all been educated into certain assumptions that characterize our field. It is as important to challenge our professional frames of reference as it is to challenge our personal ones. There exist respected educational constructs that can limit our ability to understand and act upon the world in hopeful ways. One example is the entrenched belief about control.

Bai (1998) contends that the "schooling as an institutionalized activity is particularly prone to the language of control" (p.6). For example autonomy and the attendant notion of self-control are accepted without question as good qualities and as signs of maturity as a learner. Autonomy is defined as the controlling of oneself "only through reason which is natural and internal to the self" (Bai 1998, p. 1). This assumption is based on perspective that puts the rational self in a place of dominance over other aspects of self. There are both irrational and non rational (emotions and the senses) aspects of the self (Lavouvie-Vief,1990); there are also what Scott (1997) refers to as the extrarational, which refers to a transcendent type of knowing To strive for autonomy is to name the rational part of the self as ruler over other all aspects of the self. What this implies is that under the rule of the rational self, other parts of the self such as emotion, intuition, spirit, soul, creativity are to be repressed, subdued, dominated, or negated by reason.

There is a rational quality in hope so it flourishes well in concert with reason. Hope, however, is known through the emotional, relational, spiritual, physical, and symbolic aspects of self, as well. So, attempting to negate all that is not founded in reason is a repression of many channels of hope.

Control is not only an issue for learners. Teachers are also inundated with frameworks that emphasize control. The 'good' teacher will have a clear set of instructional objectives, program goals, and specified outcomes and adhere to a curriculum that will positively assure that learners will achieve mastery. This ironclad guarantee implies a large measure of control of teacher over learner and, furthermore, is so entrenched in our system that learners come to expect and demand this supplication of their control. Fromm (in Bai, 1998) states "the source of desire, nay, compulsion, to control others (we could also include the desire to control the self) is the fear of life, or to be more precise, fear of unpredictability, uncertainty, and openness which are intrinsic to life not yet controlled and disciplined" (p.7). Control is the response to the fear of uncertainty. It has been demonstrated in the stories in this research and in other stories across the scope of literature on hope that hope is an alternate response to uncertainty. Coming from a perspective that assumes hope rather than control as a response to uncertainty would constitute the kind of perspective transformation that would significantly change the face of education. This shift in perspective seems worthy of the effort because whereas control can only control fear, hope can negate fear (Jevne, 1991).

Consider the implications of truth-telling.

Edey and Jevne (2003) tackle the questions of false hope. Some in the medical field are reluctant to abide a patient's unrealistic hope for fear of possible negative outcomes. This discussion is in the context of false hope that may interfere with realistic treatment. Medical practitioners also consider their ethical responsibility in making those choices. McGee (1984) offers a model of hope that rests on a continuum from a state of unrealistic hopelessness to being unjustifiably hopeful. While she contends that unjustifiable hopefulness can impede the healing process, she does not assert that the solution lies in crushing that hope. I have witnessed many incidents in ESL where teachers have trampled the hopes of learners in their well-meaning but misguided sense of being realistic. I believe the advice of Edey and Jevne (2003) can apply well to us in the field of ESL: "The least we can do is stand in the shoes of the client for a moment, experience the hope or hopelessness" (p.48). By first empathizing with and validating their lived experience of hope in the moment, we as teachers can be more authentic in our responses to learners' unjustified hopefulness or complete hopelessness. This was born out in participant stories about being listened to by teachers, about having the time to listen to learners, and in their conflicting hope associations around marks.

There are some things that students do not like to hear. The data here suggest that "you got a low mark" is one of them. In addition, "You won't be able to do this"; "You have to be realistic about your job opportunities in Canada"; "I don't have time to listen" are other examples that surfaced in this study. The learners' sense of hope was challenged by such comments. Likewise, there are ways in which learners infringe on the hope of their teachers. Both teachers who participated in the study, as well as the one learner participant who had been a teacher in his home country, said they felt their hope challenged when learners made comments like "I just can't get it" and "I give up".

Where does an educator's professional ethics lie when learners are unrealistically hopeful or when they exhibit hopelessness? When dealing with the hopes of our learners, there may come a point where, as novelist Ann-Marie MacDonald (1996) says, "The facts of a situation don't necessarily indicate anything about the truth of a situation. In this moment fact and truth become separated and commence to wander like twins in a fairy-tale, waiting to be reunited by that special someone who possesses the secret of telling them apart." (p.174). Can educators assume to be that 'special someone' who can distinguish between a hopeless fact and a hopeful truth? Is our insider status as one who knows the language and culture enough to ensure that we can tell a bone-fide hope from false hope? False hope is our engagement with another's hope (Edey, 2004). It is not false to them, it is false to us. It says more about our own hope than that of the other. Hafen (1996) replaces the notion of false hope with informed denial, which is a deliberate choice made by a person that allows for and actually inspires hope.

I am reminded of a hope story from my own career in ESL. I was working in an English for Employment program sponsored by Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Provincial dollars were allocated to assist adult immigrants and refugees to gain the language, cultural, and employment-readiness skills to secure gainful employment. The mandate was to have the learners employed three months after their one-year program. One man, a doctor from Afghanistan, was accepted into the program, although his English language skills were at the lowest end. His reading and pronunciation were almost unintelligible, in spite of a broad vocabulary and adequate listening comprehension. His stated goal was to go to medical school and resume his profession as a physician. Most of the teachers and other staff members deemed his hope to be highly unrealistic.

The year was fraught with frustration and this learner was very angry at most of the staff for underestimating his potential and undermining his hope. He defiantly held to his own hope and railed angrily against the 'realists' who were conferred with the responsibility to prepare him for a job he could realistically secure. A year after the program, I had the pleasure of running into him, and he spoke with me about his journey. He had come to terms with not practicing medicine in Canada, at least for the time being, (he still left the possibility of future medical school as an option) but was working alongside doctors as an operating room attendant. He was happy and fulfilled to be working in the setting he loved, with colleagues to whom he could relate, and with the job security on which a husband and father depends. And we had been asking him to resign himself to a position as a nursing attendant!

This was an example of 'the difficult student', the one the teacher participants referred to as a challenge to their sense of hope. When ESL teachers encounter difficult students, an intentional gaze at the hope underlying their passion may serve to bolster the hope of both, thus enabling a shared successful outcome.

Nekolaichuk and Bruera (1998) challenge what they refer to as the myth of truth telling. Although their discussion is situated in a health context, I believe it poses valuable questions to ESL educators regarding the ethics of hope. Truth-telling is viewed as an ethical and moral obligation (Nekolaichuk & Bruera, 1998). A critical approach to education, which encompasses autonomy, and the right of self-determination, has further entrenched the assumption that full disclosure of the truth is a prerequisite of a democratic and participatory education. I believe that what Nekolaichuk and Bruera (1998) say about oncology holds true for adult ESL education in that "an equally important obligation – respect for the value of hope… – needs to accompany the ethical obligation of truth telling" (p. 39). I reiterate their question in a new context: If educators are morally obligated to tell the truth, then are they not equally obligated to provide truth in a way that respects a learner's experience of hope?

Depending on their particular philosophical stance, advocates for emancipatory practice would contend that fostering critical reflection, self-awareness, conscientization, or individuation is an essential responsibility of the ethical educator and on this I do not disagree. However, there is conflict inherent in the dichotomy between our aspirations for critical education and what we have the right to impose upon another. Hope theory helps us to frame other constraints and obligations we face as ethical educators.

Hope research suggests that denial can be beneficial by actually making room for hope (Hafen et al., 1996; Jevne 1993). Cousins (1989) remarked in the context of serious illness that hope does not deny the diagnosis, but tries to defy the verdict. Hope, unlike optimism, is realistic and does not deny the circumstance, it just denies the inevitability of the outcome - and our hopeful Afghani doctor was shouting, "You can't get me on circumstantial evidence!"

Critical theory as a path to emancipation highlights different facets of our ethical obligation than does hope theory. I suspect the Truth regarding our ethical responsibility as educators remains somewhat obscured.

Recommendations for Research

Hope is a tangible quality worthy of study in terms of its impact on and in education. Research in the field of education has hardly begun to tap the wealth of knowledge and profound effects that could be realized through an increased understanding of hope. Although most empirical research on hope comes to us from the fields of medicine and psychology, more interest is being shown of late in the field of education (Holt, 2000; Kauser, 2000; Roset, 1999; Snyder et al., 2002). More work is needed to explore the impact of hope in the classroom and in the planning of education programs.

This was an exploratory study. It was open to a wide range of hope perspectives and focused on an introductory understanding of how hope intersects with transformative learning. More inquiry into specific areas, such as humour or hard work could go far to help refine our understanding of the concepts that define hope and how they intersect with education.

Jevne and Edey have demonstrated the importance of the narrative in getting at the essence of hope. This research approach, while somewhat cumbersome and time- consuming, can offer data that is meaningful and useable in the education enterprise. The use of photography also helped elicit a depth of response that might otherwise have been missed. There are other portals through which one can access hope, such as music and art. Research using these as methods of inquiry may unveil aspects of hope that have not yet been articulated.

The affirmative action that resulted from this research was unexpected. The intentional focus on hope raised the level of hope in all of us involved in the project and this pronounced visibility of hope translated into action very rapidly. It would seem, then that hope would be very effectively studied under an action research model. I would look forward to seeing an action research project about hope conducted in an ESL setting.

Further research is needed to expand the hope sample to be more inclusive of the multicultural realities in education. Because ESL learners are typically awash in the chaos and conflict situations similar to those where hope is most visible and easily studied, and because they are courageously seeking a new life, these people *must* be 'harbourers of hope'. If hope were not their motivation and sustenance, one would want to know what was. As we embark on this era of globalization, we are all called to engage more intimately with one another. There is promise in our shared learning as we come to know what it means to hope from a variety of perspectives.

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APPENDIX 1: GUIDING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What would I have to know about you to understand your hope?

What do your photographs tell me about your hope?

What did you learn about hope from your mother/father?

What color is hope?

What smell do you associate with hope?

If hope were located in your body, where would it be?

When you think about your ESL experiences what enhances your hope and what threatens your hope?

After this series of interviews, what did you learn about hope?

What was it like for you to participate in this study?